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

J. RICHARD BOCK

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is May 15, 2002. This is an interview with J. Richard Bock. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Do you go by Rick?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: The J. stands for what?

BOCK: It stands for James. For some reason, I was never called that, so it's been a burden all my life. I had an uncle who was named James, so I guess I was named after my uncle and the name was not used so as to avoid confusion.

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born? Tell me something about your family.

BOCK: I was born in Philadelphia in 1942. My father was a research chemist with Rohm & Haas. My mother, who also had a background in chemistry, was from Scotland. She had come over as a postdoctoral fellow. My parents had met in graduate school. After she had gone back in Britain for several years, they got married and she came over.

Q: Did you grow up in Philadelphia?

BOCK: Not really, no. My dad changed jobs when I was seven years old and we went out to the West Coast. I grew up in a little town called Shelton, Washington, near the bottom end of Puget Sound.

Q: Tell me something first about the background of your father and the Bock family.

BOCK: He came from Kansas. His grandfather was an immigrant from Germany who went to Missouri and then had settled later in Kansas on a farm. My grandfather moved into a town called Pratt and became a bank officer. That was the environment my dad was brought up in. He went off to college, took up chemistry.

Q: Where did he go to college?

BOCK: Undergraduate at Kansas State and then he went to the University of Illinois for postgraduate and got his doctorate there.

Q: And on your mother's side?

BOCK: My mother's father was a schoolmaster in Scotland. Her mother died in the flu epidemic of World War I. So, my mother as the oldest in the family was sort of the big sister to a family of four. Then she went to St. Andrews University and got her degree in chemistry. She then got what was then called a Commonwealth fellowship, which in the meantime has become a Harkness Fellowship, I believe. At any rate, it was originally conceived as almost a reverse Rhodes. She came over to the U.S. to the University of Illinois.

Q: This must have been before the war.

BOCK: This was well before the war. It was the late '20s when she initially came over. They met at the University of Illinois. She had a work obligation as a result of the fellowship and went back to Britain for three years. Then they got married in 1934.

Q: Were there any brothers or sisters?

BOCK: I have an older brother, two years older.

Q: Do you recall stories that you would hear later on about the Depression. Getting married in '34 was a difficult time for a lot of people.

BOCK: Yes. I suspect, like a lot of people in that generation, they didn't talk a lot about it. My memory of hardship talk has more to do with wartime – rationing, the victory gardens, and the inability to get a car and all this kind of stuff. But not so much for the

Depression.

Q: When your family moved to Shelton, how long did you live there?

BOCK: Ten years until I went off to university.

Q: What was life like in Shelton?

BOCK: For a kid growing up, it was great. It was a town of 5,000 people or so. There was one school. You knew everybody in your grade, grew up with them. We were quite close to the Olympic Peninsula, so there was a lot of hiking and camping, Scouts. Later on, when I was a teenager, my dad got one of these kit boats – nothing fast – and one summer we took off without my mother and cruised all around Puget Sound.

Q: At home, you had two rather high powered parents as far as education. What was conversation around the dinner table?
BOCK: They were involved in a lot of community activities. I remember talking about those. We would talk about what we were doing in school. They both got involved in things we were doing. My mother at one point was a Cub Scout den mother. My dad was involved in the Boy Scouts in a semi-official capacity. He was never a Scoutmaster or anything like that.

Q: What were your father and mother doing?

BOCK: My father was a research chemist. Shelton was a logging town and it had basically two companies. One was a logging company which had a plywood mill. The other was a pulp and paper company which had a pulp mill and an attached lab. He was involved in product research - investigating new products that could be made out of wood pulp. My mother never returned to work after my brother was born. She was a stay at home mom, as was so typical in the 1950s. She was involved in a lot of community activities.

Q: In elementary and middle school, what sort of things were you interested in?

BOCK: I know I got interested in geography early on, not that that was much of a school subject, but it cropped up in various aspects of school. So, I can remember in the fairly early days getting an atlas and pouring over it and learning where various places were both within the United States and eventually overseas.

Q: Did you get the "National Geographic?"

BOCK: Yes.

Q: Wonderful maps.

BOCK: Yes. We had a whole collection of those.

Q: How about reading?

BOCK: I read a lot.

Q: Do you recall any books that particularly got to you at a relatively early age?

BOCK: I couldn't put a timeframe to it. I read a lot of the major classics and was quite interested in anything from "Last of the Mohicans" to "War and Peace."

Q: In school, was science very much a part of your life?

BOCK: Yes. I gravitated in that direction, mathematics more than science. It was interesting… Given the kind of school district we had, you wouldn't expect there to be much in the way of challenging courses. But because there was a sort of cadre of Ph.D.s associated particularly with the chemistry lab, there had been - and I'm not sure how this ever came about - an effort to build up a fairly strong math department at the high school level. They had what nowadays would be pretty pedestrian but was a little bit cutting edge of post-algebra mathematics. I got into that. I got on what passed for the fast track in math. I also took chemistry and the physics, although I guess I never got as deeply interested in science. The math came easy to me.

Q: While you were going up through high school, did the outside world intrude much?

BOCK: I became increasingly aware of it as I got older. I have memories of my dad serving as a civil defense watch… He goes up to some tower and is looking for bombers coming from across the Pacific. But I guess it wasn't until high school really that I became generally aware of current events. The one course which may have made the biggest impact on me was a high school civics course. We had a teacher, Andy Tuson, who really liked to stir the pot. He was very good at getting the students to debate. He was a Democrat in a relatively Republican town. In particular, most of the more articulate students tended to come from Republican families. So he loved challenging what passed for conventional wisdom. I'm not sure everybody in the class enjoyed this because in a class of 25 there may have been eight or ten who were really talking. But I certainly did and got involved in all sorts of debates about the proper role of government.

Q: Where did your family fall in the political spectrum? Was it something that you were aware of?

BOCK: I mentioned my dad was from Kansas. I would say that went far in defining his political outlook. He was conservative Republican. I do remember he was outraged at Senator McCarthy. So, he was sort of traditional Republican, not a rabid right-wing Republican. But he was definitely Republican. I don't expect he ever voted, at least in presidential elections, for a Democrat. My mother kept more quiet about her political

views. But for instance, I gathered that on at least one occasion, she had voted for FDR at the risk of breach of marriage. And she had much more – this may have had something to do with her British background, too – sympathy for more government involvement in various aspects than my dad did.

Q: It would be about 1960 when you were getting-

BOCK: I finished high school in 1959.

Q: Did you have any idea of where you wanted to go or what you wanted to do?

BOCK: I had, as I mentioned, in high school kind of gravitated toward mathematics. Although I wasn't absolutely sure of what I wanted to do, that was sort of the path of least resistance. I guess in a way I also took the path of least resistance as far as where. I went to the University of Washington, influenced to a considerable extent by the fact that my brother was there. He was two years ahead of me. He was happy up there.

Q: That's a very good…

BOCK: It's a very good school. It was conveniently located. It wasn't expensive.

Q: And far enough away to be-

BOCK: On my own.

Q: It was in Seattle, wasn't it?

BOCK: It was in Seattle and in those days that was a two and a half to three hour drive.

Q: Yes, so that sort of kept you, you could spread your wings a bit.

BOCK: Oh, yes. I looked at one point into going to Reed College, which was in some ways almost the antithesis of a big state university. I couldn't describe for you now what the thought process was, but I ultimately didn't pursue that.

Q: Well, Reed was more liberal arts, too.

BOCK: Reed was liberal arts and liberal.

Q: Very liberal.

BOCK: Yes, yes.
Q: Okay, at the University of Washington, you went there for four years?

BOCK: I went there for four years.

Q: So '59-'63. What was the campus spirit like in those days?

BOCK: Well, of course, it was already a pretty large campus, so there was probably less of a cohesive student body than you would get at a smaller school. People tended to divide up by, you know, the engineers sort of kept to themselves, and you had the medical school, which was sort of off in the corner. Plus you had a good number of commuters. I don't know what the proportion would have been. I'm reasonably sure that a good majority were residential students. There was a substantial Greek community, the sororities and fraternities, which I did not join. I thought about it. Most of my friends were not there and I didn't pursue it.

Q: Were you pursuing a course in mathematics?

BOCK: I did go, yes, I went into mathematics.

Q: Did you follow that through the whole time?

BOCK: Yes and no. I got myself onto a fast track in mathematics courses partly because I was able to test beyond the initial level. And I kept questioning myself as to whether this was really what I wanted to do. Although I was managing the math courses all right, I wasn't getting very excited about them. I talked to the faculty about this and they said, "Well, wait until you get into the courses that are more theoretical. If you ultimately pursue mathematics as a career, this is what you're going to be doing." In my junior year, I got into at least one theoretical mathematics course. In fact, I had gotten some kind of a fellowship which paid me a small amount of money in return for which I was kind of a teaching assistant, not in the sense of teaching a class, but helping out the professor. And I kind of enjoyed that, but I didn't enjoy it as much as I had hoped I would. So by the time I was midway through my junior year, I decided I needed to step back and look at the whole situation again.

I mentioned my early interest in geography. I was also by this time quite interested in world history. I had read various histories of one part of the world or another and I was interested in world events. I tried to keep up on those as best I could. So, at some point in my junior year, I decided that I had enough math credits to graduate with a math degree at that point, although I needed another year in order to get all of my non-math credits. So I decided, "Okay, my senior year, I'm not going to take any math." And I didn't. I signed up for a full load of political science, economics, I think some French (I had already taken German). And I got a lot of questioning looks from the math professor who was signing off on this. But I did it. And by the time that I finished my senior year, I decided I wanted to look for something – I was still pretty vague, but something involved in international relations.

Q: At that time, going into math as a math major, what did this point towards?

BOCK: I didn't know really. I went into math because I seemed to have a facility for it. The most obvious thing it would lead to would be academic work. As I was in it, I gathered though there were all sorts of other things that one could do with a math degree, a lot of research type jobs that corporations would employ people for. But before I really got to the point where I had to explore that, I had decided, no, it's not what I wanted to do.

Q: You were there from '59-'63. There was this election that really caught the imagination of an awful lot of young people, the Kennedy-Nixon one. Did that hit you or the campus at all or was it just another election?
BOCK: Well, I was certainly aware of it, but I would say in my own case, the impact of Kennedy came only after he had been in office and not so much in the course of the election. I don't remember it being a big thing on campus. I suppose it was with some people. We were all aware of it and followed it. In those days, the voting age was still 21, so virtually nobody on campus except some graduate students had the ability to do anything about it.

Q: Washington being in its location, did you feel as you moved into international relations, did it look on the Pacific and the Asia world more? Was this something that was obvious to you as you were beginning to look around? So much of our education on the East Coast looks towards Europe.

BOCK: I'm not sure it was that obvious to me at the time. I did take one course in Asian history. And certainly you were aware of the Asian immigrant population, which of course in those days was much smaller. But in those days also it was much more concentrated on the West Coast. So, you kind of became perhaps more aware of the Asian societies through the fact that you had people originating from those societies in your area, in your school and so on. But in terms of impact on foreign policy or thinking about foreign policy, I would say at that point it hadn't really hit me.

Q: Were there many Asian students at the University of Washington?

BOCK: There were quite a few, yes. Of course, a lot of them were Americans. But in terms of people from Asia, yes, there were Japanese in particular and ethnic Chinese from various places.

Q: How did you find Seattle in those days? Now it's sort of… My daughter and son in law moved there, have been there for about 15 years, and it's become sort of the avant garde capital of the United States.
BOCK: It didn't have that image in those days. It was a very pleasant place. It had, we thought, few of the problems of the aging East Coast cities. It was a much more livable place. But it was that kind of atmosphere rather than any sort of particular panache.

Q: By the way, your father being involved with the lumber industry, did you both in high school and in college pick up any of the lumber, particularly the labor problems and also

conservation and some of these themes that ran through the lumber industry? They're quite apparent. It's like the fishing industry.

BOCK: In a couple of ways, I did. First of all, about the time I left to go to college, there was a major dustup over water pollution involving my dad's company. The area around Shelton included a number of oyster farms, including a particular type of oyster which is very small and quite rare. It doesn't grow anywhere else. It's called the Olympia oyster. And the oyster beds, the oysters started dying. The oyster growers and others who were in the budding environmentalist movement claimed it was caused by discharges from the company's plant. And the company, of course, denied it. There was, I think, a lawsuit. I didn't pay much attention to the legal aspects. But eventually the company had agreed to set up a major monitoring effort to try to determine what was going on. This issue dragged on for years. So I was definitely aware of that.

Then while I was at the University of Washington, I had a series of summer jobs. I should mention that shortly after I went to Seattle, my dad was transferred up to Vancouver, Canada. Rayonier, the company he worked for, had been bought by IT&T, which at that point was developing into this octopus that it became. IT&T in turn bought a Canadian pulp and paper company, which also had a research lab up in Vancouver. I never lived there, but I would visit them on holidays and part of the summer. One summer, I asked whether there was any possibility of getting a summer job with Rayonier. My dad looked into it and he arranged for me to apply for work at a little mill. It was in the north end of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, at a place called Port Alice. It was a pulp mill which was totally isolated. The only way you could get in there was either by seaplane or by barge. There were no roads that connected with anywhere. And it was a very curious workforce. You had a combination of company lifers who were there on transfer for a couple of years or so in management positions, a large community of Chinese from somewhere north of Hong Kong, none of whom spoke English, and a large number of – I don't want to say drifters; it was kind of a mix of people who had either no place else to go or people who were making their stake - "I'm coming to this place for two years. I'm going to save my money and go out and do X." And then a few of us college students. I remember as a condition of my employment, I needed to join the union. My dad wasn't real happy about that, although he… He wasn't a union person. And I got a pretty good view of labor relations in what was very much a company town. This was <u>the</u> company town.

Q: Did you live in barracks?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: Company store or the equivalent?

BOCK: Yes, I didn't go buy much, but there was also a company mess hall, where I ate.

Q: I assume the Chinese were unto themselves.

BOCK: Yes. The guy who ran the mess hall, I think his name was Jack Wong, seemed to have a way of bringing in all of his clan over time in there. So there was this huge number of people, all of whom, I think, were related to Jack Wong. I worked on an assembly line and the Chinese would work there, too. But after hours, they pretty much kept to themselves.

Q: What sort of work were you doing?

BOCK: This was a finishing mill for pulp. And the pulp would come out of the process in sheets, which would then be cut up by various machines and things would be done to it. Eventually, it would be wrapped. At various times, I was working in various parts of that process.

Q: While you were at college, particularly your last year, '63, were you looking at the world more?

BOCK: Yes. You asked earlier about Kennedy. I think that may have been a partial result of that, that people my age were suddenly more interested in politics, more interested in America's role in the world, because of the fact that Kennedy made it seem more sexy or something. But I certainly remember vividly, more than the Cuban Missile Crisis, a scare over Laos, a time when it looked like we were going to go to war in Laos.

Q: Yes. We had the President up there with his pointer pointing at maps of Laos.

BOCK: Yes. And so all of these things certainly made me more aware of the outside world and more interested in it, too, although I wasn't particularly focused on what to do about this interest.

Q: Spring 1963, whither Rick Bock?

BOCK: I was very nervous about this. I decided what I wanted to do was to try to go to graduate school in international relations or something similar. One, I didn't know whether I could qualify to do that or whether I was going to have to put in a fifth year somewhere in order to get a degree in political science as a prerequisite. Two, the University of Washington was in those days really inexpensive. My first year, my total expenses were less than $1,000. My parents were paying for this. That was fine. I was kind of worried about, if I went to graduate school, I didn't really want to go back and ask them to support that because that wasn't any particular expectation that had been built in. So, on the one hand, could I get into a graduate school that I wanted to and secondly, how was I going to pay for it? Both were issues. And I applied to various places. I guess I was accepted maybe by more than one, but I was accepted by the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, which had just received this then anonymous grant of x million dollars, a very large grant, and they had made their entire graduate program a "full ride." Plus, the Woodrow Wilson School was one of these places that wanted diversity of background,

not necessarily diversity in our current codeword, although there was a little bit of that, but they didn't want all political science majors. So, here I am, I'm a mathematician, take me! And it worked.

Q: This is great. Also I assume that coming from the state of Washington would have helped because so many of the schools were trying to get a little geographic diversity rather than everybody from New Jersey or the equivalent thereof.

BOCK: Yes, that was also part of it.

Q: You went to the Woodrow Wilson school from '63 to when?

BOCK: '65. It was a two year master's program.

Q: How did you find that? Did you feel you were coming from the small town to the big town universitywise?

BOCK: Initially I might have had some feelings along that line, but not for very long. For one thing, in one sense, it was almost the opposite. I was coming from this large, somewhat undifferentiated state university - the graduating class maybe had 4,000 people – to the Woodrow Wilson School, where I was entering a class with about 25 people. And so we very quickly became a community. And whatever initial qualms I might have had, it was no problem at all. I was worried about people coming there with a lot of background in political science and so on, which I didn't have. Some of them had it and some of them didn't. So it didn't matter too much.

Q: How did you find your group when you got there? What sort of people were they and they did they have an outlook?

BOCK: I would say the group by and large was one which was very interested in public service. That was the mission of the school and that was also inculcated by the school. But I think there was a good deal of self-selection there, too, so that that was the most striking thing about it. People who really… Public service not necessarily meaning government service, although there was a lot of that. The year I was there, the school seemed to be moving a little bit away from the emphasis on international public service and more toward a domestic focus. This I'm sure was influenced by the Kennedy years. So that in a way I found myself in a little bit of a minority with my interest more in the international side, but not isolated.

Q: I'm trying to capture the times, too. We were probably moving back, but during the '80s and '90s we've gone through a period where government work was looked down upon and was denigrated, particularly by the politicians. Although they suckle at the nipple of the government, they knock it as being a service. But at this point government service was really looked upon as quite an honor, wasn't it, or at least you were doing something positive.

BOCK: Well, yes. That obviously wasn't universally shared. But in terms of my own environment, I think it would be quite striking moving from 1958 and my debates in civics class, where the general assumption was that government should be small and people should be left alone, to 1963 at the Woodrow Wilson School, where there was this great emphasis on "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." So, yes, that was a striking change at least in my environment.

Q: How about the civil rights movement? Was that hitting you?

BOCK: It did while we were there. Of course, that was also partly a result of coming east. The West Coast, the whole question of race relations was obviously an issue but it wasn't an issue with a real high profile. Come east and all of a sudden you were faced with it, not only the civil rights movement in the South, but also the inner city issues. This must have been about the time that Michael Harrington came out with his book, "The Other America." I don't remember what year that was, but I'm sure it was sometime while I was at Princeton or just before. So, yes, there was a lot of realization about problems that the U.S. needed to overcome, many of them associated with race.

Q: How did you find the professors and the education? Was there a thrust to it?

BOCK: Well, yes, I think it gets back to what I was mentioning earlier. There was this general commitment to public service. Many of the professors embodied this. Many of them had spent some time working in government at one time or anther. In fact, I would say the school at that time tended to inculcate this "in and out" idea, spending part of your career working in government service but not necessarily full-time. Of course, we had people who had had careers in government, too. And the school also had a program, which it still has, the Mid-Career Fellow program, where career government employees were there for a year of study and mixed with the students very well. That was another window on government work.

Q: At the school, did it stand alone or were you moving to taking courses in the regular Princeton programs, too?

BOCK: There was a considerable amount of mix. There were professors who would teach both economics at Woodrow Wilson School and economics in the economics department or political science, but much less so with the students. Woodrow Wilson classes by and large were attended by Woodrow Wilson students only. It was possible for Woodrow Wilson students to take courses elsewhere in the other faculties, but not very convenient to do so. I don't believe I ever did. On the other hand, I lived the first year at the so-called Graduate College, which was a graduate student dormitory. I roomed with a physics student who was already friends with a bunch of political science people and so we had a little group there. None of them were from Woodrow Wilson except me. So, I had my own association with some aspects of graduate student life. I found you had to make a real effort to get involved at all with undergraduate stuff and I did not make that effort. I had very little sense of undergraduate life at Princeton.

Q: In the international relations field, was there a thrust of the school? Were you looking at any particular aspect?

BOCK: Not really. First of all, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I did not go to the Woodrow Wilson School thinking I wanted to join the Foreign Service. I was barely aware of the Foreign Service at that point. As far as the professors were concerned, there was quite a mix. You had people ranging from very strong emphasis on the role of international assistance to a kind of Herman Kahn realpolitik and everything in between. So, it was a good, broad approach to the whole field.

Q: Did the Foreign Service send a blip on your radar at that time?

BOCK: Well, during the time I was there, yes, and partly because we had people from the Foreign Service there for a year. We also had as one of our professors George Kennan, who was kind of an icon even in those days, and who could give you some feel for what his Foreign Service career had been. So, yes, gradually, I became aware of the existence of the Foreign Service and started thinking seriously about it.

Q: Did you get jobs during the summers?

BOCK: Well, there was only one intervening summer. The school had a policy of having everyone go on a summer project, which my year had to do with European integration. So, we all packed up and spent the summer in Europe. We had seminars at the beginning and end of the summer. We were supposed to pick our own topic, do research independently, write a paper, and present it. And there were some people in the group who were a little resentful of this. 1964 was almost the height of the civil rights movement and there were a few people in the group who really wanted to do something related to that. In fact, I think maybe one or two did make special arrangements. But the strong view of the school was that everybody should be working on the same project and even though a number of the students were domestically oriented, they could do studies on domestic topics in Europe as a kind of comparative basis and they did. They worked on such topics as urban transportation issues, for example.

Q: Was this your first time to Europe?

BOCK: No. It was the second time to the continent. My mother had taken my brother and me to visit relatives over in Scotland when we were kids. Aside from that, I had been to Europe the summer after my junior year with two college friends. We spent the whole summer, went over there, leased a car, drove all around. So, this was my second trip.

Q: What were you doing when you went to the Woodrow Wilson trip?

BOCK: I chose as a topic Austrian efforts to integrate with the European Community, partly because I knew some German. I could make use of the language. It was also a topic

that was quite interesting because there were domestic political issues within Austria, there were trade issues, and there was the whole question of Austrian neutrality and the relationship, the views of the Soviets and so on. So, it had for me quite an interesting mix of issues and I kind of enjoyed it.

Q: How did you find the Austrian people? Were they open about talking?

BOCK: Yes. I mean, I was pretty green at how one does this. But, yes, I got to see people in the political parties there and the labor unions and in the Employer's Federation. I saw somebody in at least one of the government departments. I remember going to the American embassy in Vienna and asking for guidance on approaching the Soviets and being told, "Oh, you don't want to do that." So then I just marched over to the Soviet embassy anyway and asked to see somebody, which was kind of amusing. They didn't know what to make of me. But yes, I found… I was flailing a little bit, but it was a good introduction to Foreign Service work in a way.

Q: You graduated in '65. Had you taken the Foreign Service exam?

BOCK: I took it that spring, I guess, whenever it was given, during my second year.

Q: How did you do?

BOCK: I passed.

Q: Did you know much about the Foreign Service?

BOCK: Well, I was learning. I certainly knew a lot more than I had a year earlier. I didn't have a real good sense of it, I suppose.

Q: With George Kennan, did you have courses from him?
BOCK: I had a course from him.

Q: How did you find this?

BOCK: Oh, he was very impressive. He was a little bit intimidating. He had been there and done it all. But he was approachable. I remembering having a number of consultations with him about the paper I was working on. I don't remember really sitting down with him and interviewing him about the Foreign Service. I don't think I did that. But I got some sense during the lectures. He would refer back to things.

Q: You took the oral exam?

BOCK: I took the oral exam while I was still in graduate school.

Q: This was about '65 or so?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

BOCK: Sure. I particularly recall the one that I did the most poorly on, which was a role playing one. I was supposed to be an American diplomat in New Delhi faced with this self-righteous Indian student who was berating the United States for all its evils and how was I going to respond? I was nervous enough that I found it difficult to put myself in a role, so I was, "Well, here's what I would do" and the examiners kept saying "No, no, you are this person." That just made me more flustered.

Q: Did you pass that time?

BOCK: I did pass.

Q: Did you come more or less right away into the Foreign Service?

BOCK: I left Princeton not knowing whether I was going to be offered an appointment or not. I had also during the course of that year come down and interviewed the CIA. What was it they gave in those years? It was something like a Management Intern exam-

Q: It was the Civil Service thing.

BOCK: Yes. The CIA drew on that and they invited me for an interview and I came down. I don't remember whether I got a formal offer from them or not, but I got the sense that I was going to get one at any rate and decided, "Well, I really want to see what happens on the Foreign Service." So, I held off. I drove west, visited my brother, went up to see my parents, who were still in Vancouver. It was at that point that I had a letter waiting for me offering me an appointment in August.

Q: So you came in in August '65?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: You went through what's called the A100 course, a basic course. How big was the group?

BOCK: About 30, I think.

Q: Can you characterize it? Who were the people in it?

BOCK: Well, it's quite different from recent years in the sense that you still had the ceiling on age for entering the Foreign Service or the exam. You could not be older than 31 I think it was. So all these people were in their 20s. It was a mix of people like myself

- I was 23 - people 23, 24, 25, who were just out of college, with others who had done something else after their studies. There was a scattering of folks who had been in the military for a two-year stint, officers. And then there were a few people who had done other things. School… You know, the 28 year olds really seemed like the mature guys.

Q: While you were doing all this before you went into the Foreign Service, did the idea of the Peace Corps have any attraction towards you?

BOCK: I thought about the Peace Corps. Several of my Woodrow Wilson classmates had been in the Peace Corps. And I guess I can't remember exactly now what my thinking was. I think at that point I decided that I'd really rather go directly into the Foreign Service.

Q: The draft wasn't in effect during this time?

BOCK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There is a long story if you really want to hear it.

Q: Maybe make it medium sized.

BOCK: I'll try to cut it down. The draft had not raised its ugly head while I was in undergraduate school. It did when I was in graduate school and I got a student deferment. I mentioned that I after finishing the Woodrow Wilson School I drove West. hen I got to my brother's house, I had this letter from the Foreign Service offering me an appointment. I also had a letter from my draft board. The appointment to the Foreign Service was in August. The letter for the draft board said, "Take your physical by July 15th" or something like that. The draft board was in Seattle. The first thing I did, of course, was call the State Department. I said, "Help! Can you guys get me a deferment?" It wasn't a laugh but the answer was, "No, we don't do anything like that." So, I thought, "Now what do I do?" So I thought about it while I was driving up to the Northwest and finally decided that I really did not want to at this point, Foreign Service in hand, go into the draft and spend two years. It wasn't Vietnam so much. This was summer of '65 and Vietnam was only barely on the horizon. So, I decided I would look into getting into the Reserves. I did. I checked with several Reserve units in Seattle, but I was honest. I said, "I'm on my way to Washington, DC." Of course, they didn't want to bother to go through the paperwork to get me in and then lose me. So, it wasn't until I found some cooks unit full of mostly Filipinos that they didn't seem to care and signed me up. So, I was in the Reserves, but I just collected my uniform, dumped it in the trunk of my car, and headed back East. When I got there, I found a unit in the Washington area. But that then led to complications. This is now the fall of 1965. We have started sending people in a big way to Vietnam. Draft calls are way up. And the basic training camps were full of draftees. They put a hold on any basic training for Reservists. And so I was kind of caught between two stools here, between the State Department, which wanted me to get my basic training out of the way before assigning me, and this freeze on basic training. So, I was in limbo for several months. Finally, when the freeze got extended, the State Department decided to assign me overseas anyway. Once that happened, and I did what I was supposed to,

report to the DAO's office and so on, and then the Army just discharged me for "convenience of the Service."

Q: When you were taking the A100 course, at that point, did you have any idea of what you wanted to do, where you wanted to go?

BOCK: Yes. I think I wanted to go to Europe. But I was in the situation where everybody else got an assignment and I didn't, and I knew that was going to happen because of my military situation. At the end of the course, they came out and they read all these assignments. I was just sort of off at the side. So, I guess I didn't get too emotionally involved in the process during A100 because I had this other problem.

Q: By the way, had you developed a significant other or anything like that?

BOCK: No.

Q: You were footloose-

BOCK: I was footloose and fancy free.

Q: How about women? Were there many women in your A100 course?

BOCK: No. There were three, only one of whom really survived long-term. One of them, when she got her overseas assignment, had some kind of crisis and she decided that wasn't what she wanted to do after all and ended up, I think, converting to Civil Service. Another, who was quite good looking, had two assignments and got married. That was in the days where you couldn't stay in if you were married. The third also got married and had to leave but left very unhappily. It wasn't too much later that they revised the policy and she got back in and had a successful career.

Q: So what happened to you?

BOCK: I had at least a couple of temporary assignments in Washington, one of which was doing something in Personnel area to do with all the Wristonized former civil servants who were being converted.

Q: Ten years afterwards.

BOCK: Well, yes, and I can't remember exactly what the issues were, but there was something still involving them. Later on then, I got a short several week assignment as a special assistant to Ambassador Phillip Bonsal, who was heading up some interagency study of counterinsurgency, I think. I wasn't involved in the substance of it very much. The assignment was very short. But there were people from Defense and CIA and State and AID, I think.

Q: How long did this last?

BOCK: The A100 course started in August and would have been finished by October something. It was early in the new year, early '66, when the Department decided they would assign me overseas after all and very quickly came up with an assignment in Germany. Since German was my best second language, I was very happy with that.

Q: Where did you go?

BOCK: Bremen, which in those days was a small consulate, a four officer post.

Q: You were there for two years?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: Was the post a consulate or a consulate general?

BOCK: It was a consulate general, but much smaller than the other German consulates general.

Q: Who was the consul general?

BOCK: Leo Goodwin, who was not career Foreign Service. He had been in the military Judge Advocate Corps, I believe. He had had something to do with the Nuremberg trials and then had later on had been in government work and then was named consul general specifically for this assignment.

Q: How many other officers were there?

BOCK: There was one mid-career officer who did the economic work and then two junior officers, including myself. I had the consular assignment and the other junior officer had administrative plus overseeing the USIS operation.

Q: Was the rotational policy in?

BOCK: There was a rotational policy, but it didn't apply to Bremen. We were too small.

Q: So you were doing consular work. What sort of work did you have?

BOCK: Everything except immigrant visas, which was good. I would compare notes with my consular colleagues, many of whom were junior officers elsewhere in Germany. We'd have get-togethers. I thought, "Boy am I lucky" because these were people doing non-immigrant visas all day long or immigrant visas all day long. In my case, it was quite a few non-immigrant visas, most of which were fairly non-controversial. We had a lot of crew lists, since Bremen was a major port. Then there were all the American citizen

services, which was considerable, ranging from lost passports to various people with either claims of U.S. citizenship or wanting to renounce U.S. citizenship for one reason or another. Then there was a drawer full of files on crazy people who would show up from time to time and claim this or that.

Q: Were you involved in putting destitute Americans on ships or anything like that?

BOCK: Yes. This was a major problem because other posts in Germany would say, "Go up to Bremen."

Q: I was 10 years before you, but I was down in Frankfurt doing protection and welfare.

BOCK: People always sent them up there.

Q: Oh, yes.

BOCK: Yes. Yes, we had a good number of those. That was always a bit of a struggle.

Q: Can you give me some ideas of some of your more interesting cases that you had to deal with?

BOCK: Well, I really should have written a chapter after I finished Bremen. I was full of stories in those days and I really haven't had a chance to think very much about it since then. I do remember somebody who came in… The consular assistant said, "Mr. So and So wants to see you." She said it in a funny kind of way. I said, "Okay." I was in charge. He came in and was complaining about the implants in his teeth that were receiving signals from the CIA and outer space - all this sort of thing. I finally got him out of my office and came out and sort of rolled my eyes. I said, "Do you know anything about this guy?" She said, "Here's the file on all his previous appearances." I remember one case I was concerned about because this woman was an American citizen who was married to a Hungarian-born stateless person. She had been trying to get him into the United States one way or another and all doors were closed. She hadn't been dealing with me on this. I don't remember where she had been pursuing it. So, she came in and wanted to renounce her American citizenship. She had nothing else to fall back on. It wasn't like a German-American saying, "I want to defer to the German citizenship." So I stalled her and asked Washington for advice and tried to figure out ways to persuade her not to do it. I think ultimately she did it, but we waited a while because she was doing it out of frustration.

Q: Her husband couldn't get a visa?

BOCK: I don't remember what the problem was with her husband. I have a feeling… We had extensive files on people with communist affiliations and many of those files were suspect. But what had happened, of course, is that right after the war you had all these military intelligence people all over Germany. You would k now this better than I.

Q: Yes. And they investigated the hell out of-

BOCK: And they investigated. You were coming from a situation where Germany in the '30s was to a certain extent divided between Nazis and communists. And if you weren't a Nazi, then somebody was going to call you a communist. A lot of the stuff got into the files in a fairly undifferentiated fashion. So, they were on a lookout list. I don't remember specifically – this guy was Hungarian, not German, but I have a feeling it may have had something to do with that, that he had something in his file which was preventing him from getting to the United States. It wasn't anything that I had been asked to deal with and I don't think I was in a position to deal with it. We didn't handle immigration matters in Bremen.

Q: Yes. No, we had a lot of cases where, particularly after the Hungarian Revolution, too, a lot of people came in. I was a refugee relief officer at one point. We had these people who were coming out of these camps which were cesspools of intrigue and people would come out with claims that they were Nazi war criminals and communist kommissars. Everybody was informing on everybody else, mainly out of spite or jealousy.

BOCK: Well, I was seeing the legacy of that in the late '60s. There wasn't much new information going into these files at that point, but it was stuff that had been accumulated in the first 10 years after the war and nobody had really sorted out properly. I remember several cases where there were prominent people in the German Social Democratic Party who wanted to go to the United States for one reason or another, perfectly legitimate. You'd get the town burgermeister who would apply for a visa and we'd run into a brick wall in Washington because we had this thing in the file and we'd have to go through some elaborate waiver process, which was not really appropriate when you were talking about someone high in the government, and in a friendly government.

Q: How did you find German society at that time? Were you able to get around and meet Germans?

BOCK: I was able to get around considerably. I mentioned that I was the consular officer, but this was a post that had no political officer, so I was sort of the fallback political officer, too. The consul general did the high ranking stuff, but to the extent that we did reporting on rallies and that sort of thing, I was encouraged to do that. I also got involved with the youth groups of the political parties and found them very congenial, if sometimes a little overboisterous.

Q: Where did Bremen fit in the political spectrum in Germany?

BOCK: Very SPD. But not left-wing SPD. Bremen was a city-state, so, like Hamburg, you were talking about more left-wing electorate for the large part. You just didn't have the countryside, which would be a more natural basis for the conservative parties. Of course, the real struggle within the Socialist Party took place before I was there as to whether it would come to terms with the division of Germany and with the anchoring of

Germany in NATO. All that was over with, but there were still scars within the party in some cities like Hamburg, but in Bremen, that wasn't considered a problem.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relation to Bonn? Did Bonn's hand run heavy or was it way off over to the right?

BOCK: You mean the Bonn embassy?

Q: Yes.

BOCK: It didn't seem to be particularly heavy as it affected me. Unlike a lot of countries, the Bonn embassy's consular district was very small. It was basically Bonn and Cologne. Partly as a result, there was no real supervisory consular officer in Bonn. There was a person who had a kind of a coordinating responsibility, but he was not, I think, as high ranking as some of the senior consular officers in places like Frankfurt or Hamburg. So, from the point of view of consular work, no. I was, of course, on my own with a consul general who knew very little about consular work. I was constantly on the phone to Hamburg. I functioned to some extent as kind of an offshoot of Hamburg, not that they had to clear anything I did, but anytime I had a question, I would call Hamburg.

Q: There, you were able to call on people who had been in the trade for a long time.

BOCK: Yes. So that was helpful.

Q: In the '60s, was there much tourism in the area or students going to the United States?

BOCK: There was a considerable amount of it, I suppose. It wasn't all that heavy, but we certainly had students going on a regular basis. And a number of tourists. I'm sure it was nothing to compare with 20 years later, but it was there.

Q: Did you get any reflection of – this was some years after the Berlin Wall had gone up – the feeling towards East Germany and all?

BOCK: I'm not quite sure how to answer that. I was there at the time of the Grand Coalition in Bonn between Kiesinger and Brandt. So, the issue of how to deal with East Germany was certainly front and center. I don't remember it being a major factor in the politics of the region around Bremen.

Q: Was the Soviet Union considered a threat or was this again something for the citizens of Bremen over the horizon?

BOCK: To the extent I can answer that, I think the Soviet Union was looked on as kind of a boogeyman. Not maybe the immediate threat, but…

Q: You were in the British zone, weren't you? Was there much NATO business going on?

BOCK: Bremen itself was American zone. Bremen had been carved out as an American enclave in the British zone because of the Port of Bremerhaven. We had military down in Bremerhaven, a considerable logistics setup there, which we serviced for consular purposes out of Bremen. There was no significant outside military in Bremen. The Bremen consular district actually covered more than the state of Bremen. It covered the east half of Lower Saxony. There were some British bases scattered around, but nothing that I had much to do with.

Q: How about destitute Americans getting on ships? I remember getting a call from the vice consul in Bremerhaven - at that time, I think we had somebody in Bremerhaven – saying, "You know, you sent this destitute American up here. He's arrived with three suitcases and a set of golf clubs."

BOCK: Yes. We occasionally put these folks on board military ships. I don't remember any case quite that blatant.

Q: Did you have any Americans in jail?

BOCK: Oh, yes.

Q: How did you deal with them in those days?

BOCK: Well, the basic role we played was not so much to see if they were being treated properly. It was Germany. It wasn't some little dictatorship someplace. But even if they were treated properly, if they needed legal representation, we had our lawyers list. A lot of our responsibility was a question of communicating with somebody back home. Some of them didn't want to. Some did. The most vivid memory I have had to do with a big sailor from the Mississippi Delta, a black fellow, who was taken off the ship in Bremerhaven on suspicion of having killed one of his shipmates. And they had him in leg irons in a psychiatric ward with a psychiatrist doctor who was scared stiff of him, absolutely scared stiff. And part of the reason was because this sailor spoke with a very heavy accent. Although the psychiatrist spoke English, he didn't speak Mississippi Delta English and he couldn't understand this guy. So, the best thing I could do there was just to try to help these two communicate. I eventually arranged for him to be sent back to the United States. That took some doing and dragged on for months.

Q: When did you leave Bremen?

BOCK: I left at the beginning of '68.

Q: Before the Czechoslovak crisis.

BOCK: Yes. Czechoslovakia was in the news before I left. The Prague Spring was

beginning. That was visible before I left. It was quite exciting to some Germans.

Q: By the way, during this time, was our commitment in Vietnam arousing any demonstrations, students?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: How did this manifest itself?

BOCK: We were demonstrated against at the consulate several times. The police were pretty good. They usually knew about it in advance. They'd let us know and they'd be out there with protective force. But we had things, paintbombs, I think, at least, thrown at the consulate. I don't remember any Molotov cocktails. But there were some very angry people out there demonstrating on several occasions. And during the course of my contacts with these political youth groups, too. Clearly in the SPD youth group, this was a major topic.

Q: Did you find them to be hostile toward you?

BOCK: Not toward me personally, no. But they'd become pretty argumentative with you.

Q: In 1968, whither?

BOCK: You said it: Vietnam. I remember at the time, the fall of '67, when I was waiting for my assignment, I was dating an American girl who was over in Bremen. I think she was taking some courses. And she was quite opposed to our intervention in Vietnam and when I got the assignment she was horrified. She said, "You're not going to take that, are you?" I wasn't real happy about it, but I weighed the options and said, yes, I was going to take it.

Q: Did you get training?

BOCK: I did. I went into the full course at the Vietnam Training Center starting in March or April of '68.

Q: And that lasted till when?

BOCK: That was a year.

Q: To '69. Down in the garage of the Arlington Towers. A wonderful, delightful place in the Foreign Service.

BOCK: It certainly was. I'll tell you one of the most amusing things. Having gotten this assignment in this atmosphere of not really being sure I wanted to do this, and then got back… Well, I got back to Washington in February 1968. While I was just getting settled

in an apartment before I had actually started the course, the Tet Offensive took place. I can remember sitting out in my car, I think because I didn't have a radio in the house yet, tuning in to Johnson's speech in which he announced he was withdrawing for the race for reelection. So that was kind of the atmosphere in which I started the Vietnam course. And when I showed up there to sign in, I discovered that the overall head of the course was an Army colonel by the name of Detherow (pronounced "Deathrow"). And his secretary was Ms. Graves. I'm not making this up.

Q: Didn't you find that the Vietnamese training course was quite heavily military?

BOCK: Well, the training program consisted of an initial session, something like an area studies course, which might have been six weeks. There was a fairly heavy military component to that. After that, we were in language training with a once a week or so area studies component. That was not particularly… Well, some of the language training had military terminology, but I wouldn't say that was particularly militarized.

Q: How did you take to Vietnamese?

BOCK: I took to it quite well actually. I discovered I had facility for the language. After I got over the initial shock… It was a situation where we had a different teacher every hour for six hours. One of the initial group of teachers I had had a technique – she had probably been told to do this, but none of the other teachers did it – she refused to speak a word of English from the very get-go. So here we were, four or five of us in this windowless room and she starts yelling at us in this unintelligible language and expecting us to respond. It was quite a shock.

Q: For today we'll finish up just when you go out. But were you picking up any atmosphere from your Foreign Service colleagues about the Vietnam War? And then also beyond that, you were a young man. How were the tides of the Vietnam involvement hitting you?

BOCK: Well, I was in the Vietnam course throughout the entire election campaign, so obviously that was impinging. A couple of impressions. Among my classmates in the Vietnam training program, there was a large number of people right out of the A100 course, most of them straight from campus. They had signed up to go into the Foreign Service and here they were being sent out as cannon fodder, which was the common view. Most of them were extremely unhappy, some more so than others. One guy was going around passing out essays on how all this was a violation of Geneva conventions and handing them to the military instructors and so on. I probably selfishly, maybe unrealistically, considered myself a little bit removed from all this because, like several of my other colleagues, I had one or two assignments under my belt already. We had volunteers in this group, too. I wasn't a volunteer, but I figured, well, I've had one tour in the Foreign Service; I have had at least the opportunity to get a sense of whether or not this was what I want to do with my life. I can take a couple of years in Vietnam. A lot of these folks were not in that position at all and were really unhappy that they were being

dumped into this. Then I can remember some of the area studies where we were being told how all of this was a proxy war against China. At the same time, we were reading some of the background on Vietnamese history and the two just didn't jibe. A lot of the rhetoric about how this was a struggle against worldwide communism just did not make sense. And there was a lot of discussion within the class about this. Of course, I didn't finish the course until after the election had taken place. The fact that Nixon ran and won on the platform of Vietnamizing the war was something I think made it a little easier for most of us to live with.

Q: In other words, you felt that we were beginning to withdraw from our commitment.

BOCK: Yes. We were beginning to take a more sensible approach to how… I think most of us felt that the cause was just, but a lot of us felt that we weren't handling the thing very well.

Q: Were you getting anything from other of your Foreign Service colleagues about your generation? The signing of protest didn't come really until after you were in Vietnam.

BOCK: That was the time of the Cambodia incursion. Yes, I was well in Vietnam by then. There was enough debate just within our little cocoon over there in Arlington Towers that I'm not sure what was going on outside made a big impression.

Q: Okay. We'll pick this up the next time.

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Today is May 30, 2002. Rick, off to Vietnam. First, you were in Vietnam from when to when?

BOCK: I arrived in April of '69 and I left just a little over two years later, spring of '71.

Q: Okay. How would you describe the situation in Vietnam in '69?

BOCK: Well, it was, of course, a little over a year after the Tet Offensive and the South had recovered reasonably well militarily from that, although psychologically there were scars. There was what was called the Mini Tet Offensive - that was the Tet of '69, which would have been February, I believe - which was also a fairly broadly based attack on government and American strongpoints around the country, but not nearly as serious as the '68 one. But that was in the immediate background when I arrived. We're talking about drawing various conclusions, one that "This isn't nearly as bad as the previous year" or alternatively "They're still in the position of being able to do these things."

Q: How were you processed in and where did you go?

BOCK: Well, we went over there pretty much as a group, arrived in Saigon, spent a week

in Saigon basically doing paperwork, in- processing, getting some briefings. We were at that point assigned to a region. I think I'm right in saying that we did not know what region we would be in before we arrived. Then I was assigned to Region III, which is the area surrounding Saigon and headquartered in Bien Hoa. I went up to Bien Hoa. I don't remember all the specifics, but what I specifically remember about my regional in-processing is that they sent me out on a weeklong tour of the area by chopper and Air America plane. So I spent a day and a night in each of five or six provinces. That particularly sticks in my memory because one of those provinces – actually, I was sent to a district in Tayninh Province which was a continual battleground. I mean, the district advisory chief lived in a bunker. There was artillery going all night. When you tried to sleep there was always radio communication going on. You really felt you were in a war zone. So when I finally reached my own assignment, it seemed very peaceful by comparison. I suppose that was good.

Q: Yes, there were areas within that Saigon region that were a continuous battleground.

BOCK: Yes. Well, Hau Nghia Province was maybe the worst of the provinces. It was just south of Tayninh between Saigon and the Cambodian border. The province I was assigned to was Binh Duong ("Bin Zoong") Province or "Bin Yoong" Province using the southern dialect, which is just up the Saigon River from Saigon. It was probably a 45 minute or an hour drive, not that far in distance but fairly far in terms of the difference between the city and the province. Although the province capital where I was assigned was reasonably peaceful, the districts surrounding it were battlegrounds to a considerable extent. The province included what was called "War Zone D." It included War Zone C. It included the Iron Triangle, which had been the site of several big battles. It included the Michelin rubber plantation, which was still a hotbed of Viet Cong activity. The area was just crawling with American troops. Although we had no American forces stationed near the province capital, we had elements of the 25th Division, the 81st Airborne, the 1st Air Cavalry, and perhaps one other division when I arrived. That gradually became less as time went on.

Q: How was the province governed and what was our role in the government?

BOCK: Well, the provincial governor was a military man, which was if not universal then at least typical. I think all the districts – there were six districts – were all governed by military men. There were civilian administrators under him. The governor was both commander of his own regional forces and civilian administrator. So he had kind of a two sided hierarchy there over - the military and the civilians. Our advisory team was set up to kind of parallel this structure. In our case, we had a military provincial senior advisor, a Lt. Col., who had a military advisory team under him as well as a civilian advisory team. The deputy provincial senior advisor was a civilian. This was standard: if you had a military man at the top, you had a civilian next; otherwise it was vice versa. Many provinces had civilian provincial senior advisors. And we were structured so as to be counterparts to the various provincial agencies that we were dealing with.

Q: What was your impression of the governor?

BOCK: He was in some ways sort of a typical military man given to issuing orders right and left. There was always the question with everybody in Vietnam as to what extent corruption was taking place. I don't think we ever quite got a handle on it, but at least there were rumors that he might have been involved in some activity, but not in an obvious way. He didn't have difficulty in dealing with Americans and with all the advice he was getting, but he was clearly his own man and you could not be certain that any advice he was given would be taken, but he was always open to it.

Q: How about your bosses?

BOCK: I went through two sets. The provincial senior advisor when I arrived was a full colonel by then, Angus Mundy, who was extremely personable and had a very good reputation. He left within months after I arrived. And he was replaced by Lt. Col. McLean Raymond Fleigh, who I thought was very good. He was both a capable military man and also very sensitive to the situation we were in. I found him very easy to deal with and I'm very pleased that I had him as boss. Then there was the top civilian, the deputy PSA. When I arrived, there was a shuffle and a fairly junior officer who had been assigned in a lower level position was put into that position for 10 months, or so, a fellow named Gardiner Brown, whom I found very good to deal with. He was then eventually succeeded by Merle White, "Woody" White, who was a more experienced Foreign Service officer. Again, I have nothing but good words to say about him. He was very good to work with.

Q: What were you doing?

BOCK: It's interesting. When I was assigned, I was assigned as a refugee officer. There were a lot of refugees in the province because of all the military activities that had been going on. When I arrived, though, I was confronted with a situation where Gardiner Brown had just been moved up and his position was vacant. So, I was asked in very short order to look after what was called the New Life Development Office. I was the NLD officer. I find that a little difficult to describe. It basically covered the range of aid programs, community development programs. It was in concept broader than that. It had certainly a political element to it in trying to use community development to encourage and develop support for the central government. But in practice it was really mostly monitoring, if not overseeing, what the Vietnamese were doing with all the assistance we were giving them. So, that was what I was doing there for about 10 months, I think. I had a staff of several Americans and several Vietnamese working under me.

Q: Then what would you do?

BOCK: Well, one of the things I would do would be to go out with one of the Vietnamese provincial government counterparts to monitor projects that were being funded out in the villages, to talk with local level officials about what sort of projects they wanted, any problems they had with projects that were under development. I would also do that on my

own. I had still the refugee responsibility, which meant helping out with and overseeing refugee relief. There was a great deal of concern all over the country that these kind of relief funds might be misused, so a good part of it was just to make sure that whatever we were providing for these purposes was being used the way we wanted. Increasingly, I also got involved in trying to implement the now infamous hamlet evaluation system, which was something set up by Bob Komer, if I'm not mistaken, to try to have a broad based database on how well we were doing in the pacification program. It included a range of measures, both development issues, Viet Cong infiltration issues, and so on. These were supposed to be done by each of the district advisory teams. Well, many of the district advisory teams, being four levels away from the people who had devised this system, didn't have a clue. I sort of fell into the job of going around and helping all the people in our districts figure out how to make this thing work, which was an uphill struggle.

Q: My understanding is that it was hard to get what amounted to a really objective evaluation because when push came to shove, the members of the team, particularly the leader, had to show both progress and that things were good when if you wanted to have a real evaluation, you might be in a place where things were bad and probably were going to stay bad.

BOCK: Yes. One of the things that became evident over time was that every time you got a new district advisor, the hamlet evaluation system ratings went way down the month he arrived and then gradually went up for his year and then went down again as soon as the next one came in. Everybody had to show progress. Some of it was gaining the system. Some of it was just psychological. They knew that their own ratings depended on showing progress and they wanted to see progress where they could.

Q: Looking back on this and looking not only at your work but you were going around and traveling around, here were Americans put into a culture that a couple of years ago none of the people there had a clue about and doing work that we weren't trained to do, except for a quick course. How did you find this working? It always struck me as being something that was fine on paper, but when you got right down to it, there were so many obstacles to making it…

BOCK: There were. What we were ultimately trying to do was, in that immortal phrase, "win the hearts and minds of people." Some of what we did to accomplish that objective was useful. There were a lot of schools that were built. There were a lot of medical stations out in the provinces. This was good. But in terms of really accomplishing our objectives, it took something well beyond that. It's hard even now to think of what could have worked better than what we were doing. If we'd ever gotten to the point where the Vietnamese people at large felt that the South's government was on a steady winning streak, then a lot of this would have fallen into place. But the people were caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. They had, particularly in our area, a lot of North Vietnamese soldiers with whom they didn't necessarily identify. But on the other side, they had a fairly corrupt and in some cases brutal system, which is perhaps inevitable in war. You had 18-20 year old Vietnamese who were drafted up and sent out there and they were scared to death of anything that moved, just like our soldiers in some cases. They

would not have the local people's welfare at the top of their list of priorities. So it never really gelled.

Q: As you went around, when you got below the province level, how did you find some of the district… Was it province and then district?

BOCK: Province was the higher level, and then district.

Q: And at the village level, how did you find the Vietnamese government worked?

BOCK: There was a big difference between district and village. The village leaders were local. They were locally elected, although the elections weren't necessarily always democratic, but they were local people. The district, on the other hand, was an arm of the central government, so there you had people assigned and the district chief was also a military man. So, the district functioned very much as a province did, although much less elaborately. But you had these lower level military officers and civil servants who were there in many cases, particularly in the less secure areas, you had a lot of your district administration not living there, not staying there overnight. They would come in in the daytime and then hightail it out. This was even true in some cases with the school staff. They just wouldn't stay there overnight. So, one question of effectiveness of the district government was how well these people had managed to integrate into the local population from outside. At the village level, you had a different equation. These were people who by and large lived there, although there were some exceptions to that. They were local people. There, the question tended to be were they playing both sides of the war. In some cases, they were.

Q: How did you find going down, did we have junior officers out at the district level and all?

BOCK: We had, of course, district advisor teams in every district. They were largely military. They tended to be about six people headed by a captain. Of the six districts in Binh Duong, three of them had most of the time a civilian assigned to the district team. One of those civilians was a Foreign Service officer like myself. The other two were young AID employees. I should say that the whole thing I was involved in was CORDS. All the Foreign Service officers in CORDS were detailed to AID, so we were all under AID administration.

Q: You knew who was Foreign Service and you knew who was coming in for the… Sort of career Foreign Service person.

BOCK: Oh, yes, because we all knew each other's backgrounds. Some of the AID people were career and some were direct hire because they needed more people than they had. And when you had a civilian, then you had somebody whose focus was on the civilian programs. In the three districts, where we didn't have that, then a district advisor would designate one of his military people to do it, but they were not trained at all for this.

Q: What was your impression of how our military worked in this? Again, it was a very unfamiliar milieu.

BOCK: I tended in our province to see a considerable difference between the military assigned to the advisory teams and the military assigned to the regular units. And there was a certain amount of tension between the two. The folks assigned to the advisory teams were there to work with Vietnamese counterparts and they did. I don't know how much training they had. In many cases, I think very little for this. But they were fairly well inculcated as to what their job was. So they were sensitive to what the Vietnamese government was trying to do and all the surrounding issues. The main force units were a much greater struggle because they were there to fight a war. Inevitably, they had difficulty in distinguishing between the good Vietnamese and the bad Vietnamese. There was always a latent tendency to suspect any Vietnamese, including the gal who came into the hooch in the morning to pick up the wash. And with some reason. So, our provincial senior advisor often found himself kind of in the middle of these things and trying to persuade the various units in the province to be more cognizant of the impact they were having on civilians. That said, we didn't have any My Lais or anything like that.

Q: Was My Lai in your area?

BOCK: It was in the region, but it was pretty far removed from Binh Duong.

Q: It was just coming to light about that time, too, wasn't it?

BOCK: I think it was. We had minor incidents, reports of some people in a convoy throwing grenades off their truck at civilians along the road, not all the time, but now and then.

Q: How about your Vietnamese?

BOCK: I found it extremely useful. This assignment out in the province is, I'm ashamed to say, the only time in my career when I consistently spoke the local language to the office staff. I started that from the outset and I found it very useful because then I was speaking Vietnamese all the time. I don't know what my fluency was, but it was certainly adequate to go out to local villages and talk to people.

Q: Do you feel you were able to get a reasonable line on what was happening when you went out and talked to the local people?

BOCK: There were limitations. We were the foreigners from the West. Depending on the circumstance in the local village, people might or might not want to tell us what was really going on. I never felt that I really knew. You would pick up what you could. The more you went back, the more you'd find out, but…

You had asked me earlier about what sort of things I did. Another part of my job

description was political reporting. I did some of that. We functioned in that regard as kind of an extension of the embassy. The embassy had in its political section an internal unit with one person assigned, I believe, per region. That person would come out occasionally to do interviews.

Q: Do you recall who came out?

BOCK: Let me finish the thought. The region also had someone who kind of did the same thing. For most of the time I was there, Lars Hydle was at the region and doing political reporting and Mike Skol was the person in Saigon. But in addition to these two full-time reporting officers, we were encouraged to write up reports and pass them through those channels on all sorts of things, including political party activity, or if there were any things to do with security interests which would be of interest outside the standard CORDS structure. I did a bit of that.

Q: Did you feel that you were under pressure to show the rosier side of things?

BOCK: No, I didn't. I think that was probably a distinction between the military and the civilian side of the advisory setup. We were under the supervision of the Deputy for CORDS at the region. When I was there, that was Charlie Whitehouse. He was of course very interested in and committed to the whole pacification program, but I never sensed that that translated into an insistence that we had to show progress regardless of circumstances. So, no, I did not.

Q: Did you get any feel for the government sitting in Saigon? Was there any almost connection between that and loyalty towards that or was that just another government far away?

BOCK: Well, it was more the latter. There were efforts - my memory is not very clear on this - I think about that time efforts by the president to set up his own political party and try to establish it around the provinces. I believe that was happening to a considerable extent in our own province, but it tended to be kind of an artificial exercise, as that sort of thing often is. So, to a large extent, Saigon seemed to be rather far away and sort of an "us versus them" kind of situation.

Q: Did you get that feeling at all between you out in the province and our embassy back in Saigon?

BOCK: Yes, to some extent, although this system I described a few minutes ago about the roving political reporters gave us kind of a window into the embassy and diminished that to some extent.

Q: During the time you were there, were there any major developments in your province?

BOCK: The time I was there coincided with a general quieting of the insurgency. I mentioned the 1969 mini Tet. That was the highpoint for a while. So, there were

successes in the sense of less Viet Cong and North Vietnamese activity for most of the period I was there. In the spring of 1970, and by this time I was no longer in the province, was the big Cambodia incursion. That was a major development from the perspective of our province and that region because it was directed at North Vietnamese military units who were ensconced on the border and using that base to put pressure on the provinces between the border and Saigon and that was us. So, from a purely parochial perspective, that incursion seemed like a good idea. And it wasn't until you started thinking about what might be the effects in Cambodia itself that you ran into the other side of the picture.

Q: I was in Saigon at the time and I thought, "Gee, good idea. What the hell?"

BOCK: I was amazed at the reaction in the United States.

Q: This is something, too… While you were there, did you get any feel for what was going on in the United States?

BOCK: We kept up with the news, but, no, I wouldn't say I had a real feel for it. Certainly I did not have enough of a feel for it to prepare me for the reaction to the Cambodia incursion.

Q: Were you married?

BOCK: No.
Q: So you were getting post reports… My wife was picking up another degree at the University of Maryland and I was getting the campus feedback and wow.

BOCK: No. I suppose I was in correspondence regularly only with my parents and they did not fill me with political news.

Q: How about getting around? Was this dangerous?

BOCK: There is no easy answer to that. I got around a lot. I drove to all the districts. The one district I couldn't drive directly to was the one up in the Michelin plantation because the road went through the Iron Triangle and that was bombed out. You had to make a rather circuitous route to do it and often we would fly, but I did drive on a couple of occasions. You would only do it in the daytime. You couldn't even drive to Saigon at night. There were checkpoints set up and so on. There were some people who were very cautious about driving. I think that tended to be the case more with the military than with civilians. That was their training. But I drove not only around the province but around the region. I drove to most of the provinces in the region at one time or another. I drove up to Dalat at one point and later down through the Mekong Delta. The roads were open. There didn't seem to be a problem from my perspective.

Q: Did you carry weapons?

BOCK: I was issued an M16 on arrival. I never carried it. I would have been a danger to myself and anybody around me if I had ever had to use it, although I was given rudimentary training in how to use it. I didn't want to carry a weapon.

Q: I have to say, as consul general there at the same time, our concern was, there were too many damn guns around that construction workers, Americans or something, would have too much beer and kill themselves when the Viet Cong turned out to be the laundry boy or something like that.

BOCK: I don't think we had that problem out in the province. My feeling was, that wasn't my job. If it was going to be a situation where I was going to be under the gun, so to speak, then I shouldn't be there. That wasn't what I was there to do.

Q: In some of these places that were under fairly frequent attack, were there Foreign Service officers there? Were they turning into military in a way?

BOCK: I had a very limited sample to go by. Only one of our three district civilians was in such an area. He was up at Ben Cat and Ben Cat did come under attack from time to time. I would have to say no in that case, but that's not representative. To the extent I knew about other provinces, I didn't see it.

Q: Did you ever find yourself having to use your diplomatic skills of getting between the American civilians and the American military?

BOCK: Not directly. Because we had this rather large and elaborate military advisory structure in the province, if I became aware of a situation which required that kind of mediation, I would take it immediately to my military bosses. They were enough on the same wavelength that I was that they would be the ones to tackle that. There was no real negotiating. I was dealing with people who were coming from where I was coming from.

Q: Yes, and who had the clout, too, to take care-

BOCK: Well, who may or may not have had the clout, but who had more clout than I did.

Q: Something that I'm sure you got familiar with was the difference between an American Foreign Service briefing and a military briefing. So many of the briefings that I would get from the military were so terribly canned and I really didn't feel I got much out of them whereas the Foreign Service ones seemed to be a little more at least instructive or something. You'd be talking about the real situation rather than too many flip charts and all that. Did you find this?

BOCK: Yes, not so much during this time in the province because the military people out there did not have the capability to do this kind of elaborate briefing. However, and maybe this is jumping ahead, I spent about two months following my provincial assignment at regional headquarters in Bien Hoa. One of my jobs there, at least for part of

the time, was to do civilian briefing for the commanding general. So, I was there in tandem with military briefers. This was a major military command now, so you had exactly the kind of thing you're describing with all this rapid fire flip chart kind of stuff and I was up there just trying to talk and it was quite a contrast.

Q: I know. Shortly after I arrived, somebody had set it up for me and my deputy, just the two of us, Paul McCarthy. We went up to Bien Hoa and I think a major came out and did this. There was a big table and it was just the two of us. It was like he was addressing an audience of 500 or something. It was sort of eerie. It wasn't us guys sitting around and telling what it was. This is how they did it. I realize it has its purpose, but the wavelengths weren't right on that.

BOCK: Well, I have a vague memory of the commanding general coming out to our province and getting a briefing and the military team being all uptight about it. But even in that situation, we just didn't have the capability to do the real military briefing.

Q: You had a two month time in Bien Hoa? What were you doing there?

BOCK: One of the things I was doing, and I guess the one that was the most time consuming, there was a provincial survey team made up of Vietnamese who would do public opinion surveys. I was very familiar with their work because they would come around to provinces and would be tasked by provincial advisory teams – because they worked for us, not for the Vietnamese government – but they were headquartered in Bien Hoa and were often tasked out of Bien Hoa… So, when I moved into Bien Hoa, I was running them and editing their reports and either devising things for them to pursue or soliciting questions to be asked from the various provincial advisory teams. I was also working at the regional end on the hamlet evaluation system. I was doing the military briefings. There may have been some other things, too.

Q: Did you then go back?

BOCK: No. There was a personnel situation which had left me unhappy. I mentioned that I had been doing this acting NLD advisor job. Well, that was very satisfactory to the provincial advisory team and to the region, but the central system still kept that position on their books as vacant. Lo and behold, they assigned somebody to it, a guy with no background, who came out. There was an effort on the part of the provincial team to block his assignment and it didn't succeed. So, I was back in a subordinate position to somebody that didn't know anywhere near as much as I did. I hope I wasn't too obvious about it. I began to look for a way out, with support from the provincial senior advisor. So that was the genesis of my move to Bien Hoa. It was also the genesis of my next move. In Saigon, the embassy had three special assistant positions that it recruited CORDS Foreign Service officers to fill: the special assistant to the ambassador, the special assistant to the deputy ambassador, and the special assistant to the head of the CORDS program. I had become aware of this through my contact with these embassy rovers and so when I heard that there was about to be a vacancy, I put my name in the hat and went in for an

interview and was accepted.

Q: Which one?
BOCK: This was special assistant to Ambassador Bunker.

Q: We used to laugh about this. One, it was obviously an honor and was a very good thing to do. But it was called, I think, the Charm School or the Charm Competition because this was a competitive thing. The people who got it were usually damned good Foreign Service officers, but they'd been out in the field. It was a little bit like the competition to be specially picked to go to the Ops Center or something like that.

BOCK: I guess it was, yes, within the Vietnam context.

Q: So you did this from when to when?

BOCK: It must have been about June of '70. Although I was originally on a year and a half tour, this was done with the knowledge that it entailed an extension. So I served there about a year.

Q: Okay. So this would be June of '70 to…

BOCK: April or May of '71.

Q: What was your impression of the operation of the embassy?

BOCK: Well, the embassy was absolutely monstrous. From the perspective of the ambassador's office, there was a lot of stuff that just never came to his attention at all. The deputy ambassador was a DCM. The reason to call him the deputy ambassador-

Q: Was it Sam Berger at that time?

BOCK: Yes. That probably had more to do with relations to the military than anything else. (end of tape)

Q: I know, for example, I hardly ever saw the ambassador. I reported to Sam Berger.

BOCK: Yes. That was true for so much of the embassy. So, on the one hand, I was aware of the vastness of the embassy community, but on the other hand, I wasn't that engaged with a lot of it because I was there directly in the ambassador's office and was interested in only those things that he was interested in.

Q: How did Ambassador Bunker use you?

BOCK: Well, what I was there to do was, first of all, to manage the paper flow, try to determine what he needed to see and what he didn't. Secondly, to handle his contacts

with the Vietnamese government to the extent it wasn't being handled by the political counselor or someone similar. To help out when he went out on visits or entertained. So, it was very much the personal staff assistant type of job, certainly not a policy position.

Q: Who had been your predecessor?

BOCK: Al Adams. He moved then into the political section, so he was still there. At the outset, that was a real advantage because he was there to bend his ear, you know.

Q: From your perspective, how did Ambassador Bunker operate?

BOCK: I'm not sure I know how to reply to that. He had a number of trusted people that he dealt with constantly, starting with Sam Berger, including in particular the mission coordinator, who at that time was Hawk Mills, Ambassador Colby, head of the CORDS program, and the commanding general, General Abrams. So, he tended to rely on a fairly small circle. I should include the political counselor as well, although I didn't sense that he was as close.

Q: Who was that?

BOCK: Hitchcock, I guess. Bill Hitchcock.

Q: Was this a team that seemed to work together?

BOCK: I think it worked together reasonably well. On the economic side, that required Berger because that was an area that Bunker really didn't get into very much. But Berger was there and he was good. As far as the military relationship is concerned, yes, I didn't see the kind of tension you might expect between the civilian embassy and the military command. They were all, I think, working from the same script. I can remember, without having been involved in them, the endless consultations regarding the Laos incursion, which took place during the time I was there. I can't remember the name of the operation. It was not successful.

Q: Operation Lan Som.

BOCK: Yes. It was a Vietnamese operation supported by the U.S., but the troops on the ground were by and large Vietnamese. There was a period when Bunker spent a great deal of his time working on that, constantly talking with Abrams.

Q: Did you get any feel for Bunker's dealings with Washington? Nixon was in. Henry Kissinger was the National Security Advisor.

BOCK: I did not get a very good feel. One of the restrictions of my position was that all of the highly restricted traffic did not go through me. That went through Eva Kim, his secretary. The other person I should mention that was constantly in consultation with

Bunker was Ted Shackley, who was chief of station. So, you know, a lot of those messages, particularly from Kissinger, went through CIA channels, so Shackley would be bringing these things in. One would become aware of things from time to time, but I didn't have a great overview.

Q: Sometimes it happens – I can't imagine Bunker, being the gentleman he was to get into one of these screaming matches over the telephone – that you get with relationships sometimes. I've just been reading a book about Phil Habib dealing with Washington. He was not one to keep his voice down.

BOCK: Yes. No, I don't remember anything like that. He would go back on consultations, of course. I don't know what happened then. But even then I wouldn't have expected him to get in a shouting match.

Q: Were you getting any reflections of Bunker rolling his eyes, getting instructions or requests from Washington or something like that?

BOCK: No, not that I remember.

Q: As a personality, I find it difficult to think that…

BOCK: Yes, he was a very self-contained individual. He was already into his 70s. He had been through a lot. He didn't have to be there. But he had this real sense of service and that carried over into the way he dealt with people.

Q: I imagine that you were terribly busy most of the time.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: Did you get any feel for Bunker, but also the embassy dealing with the Vietnamese government? This was the Thieu government. How did they function?

BOCK: I didn't have a direct view of it, but during the time I was there, certainly Bunker talked to Thieu quite a bit. He would also talk to a couple of the people around Thieu.

Q: Did Ky ever come into the thing?

BOCK: I don't think Ky had any particular contacts with the embassy, at least not with the Ambassador.

Q: He was Vice President.

BOCK: He was Vice President. He was kind of doing his own thing. All of the Embassy dealings that I'm aware of went through Thieu or, depending on the issue, through some of the cabinet ministers. But with Bunker, Bunker dealt with Thieu. I have vague

recollections of some tensions there, but not enough that I could give you any real details. Again, Bunker, with his personality and sort of stoic approach to things.

Q: As a young officer, there was sort of a young officers' mafia in Saigon, which included people like yourself, many of whom had served in the field and came in. It was a very lively social group. Can you characterize what you were picking up from them and you were adding about what was happening?

BOCK: There was a certain amount of general cynicism both about the capability of the Thieu government and whether the pacification strategy was really working. But this was not a crisis period. So, this was kind of background noise. I can't remember any real tensions in that regard. It was more sort of people just chatting. I do remember the corruption issue was a major one. It was one that Sam Berger got in the middle of. He was at some point designated as the person who was going to have to deal with this. There were considerable pressures put on him - some of them were raised by more junior officers – about what was going on. Since it was Berger's deal, it was something that I wasn't getting involved in at all, but I certainly was aware of it.

Q: Well, I got involved in some things, for example, there had been an organization called the Embassy Club in Saigon. You probably didn't run across it. At one point, they had to repair the roof or something. It was going to take a while.

BOCK: This was the one in back of the main embassy, right?

Q: It was downtown somewhere. Later, they had a regular club with a swimming pool, but this was really a place where you could go get drinks. But they had little gift shops which were selling fur coats and diamonds. You can imagine, it was a hotbed of everything that you didn't want. They said, "Well, you really have got to repair the roof," so Berger took that to shut it down and said, "We're not repairing the roof." I ran something equivalent to a civilian court martial system. It's called the Irregular Practices Committee. American civilians who got caught in black market activities, we could take away essentially their PX privileges, which killed them. They couldn't operate anymore, including newsmen.

BOCK: The whole question of irregular practices on the part of Americans was something I was aware of from the time I was in Vietnam. Everybody knew that virtually any military unit's paymaster had ready access to Vietnamese girlfriends. I don't think I ever saw a paymaster who didn't have some sweet young thing on his arm. Such were the temptations. The ability to siphon off commissary goods and PX goods and so on was legendary. I don't remember this coming up very strongly during the time I was at the embassy, but I may just not be remembering it.

Q: I remember watching Thai soldiers being marched to the PX in Cho Lon and each getting a certain amount of whatever they got. It would eventually end up on the black market.

BOCK: If I'm not mistaken, what Berger was charged with dealing with was not that kind of thing at all, but major diversion by Vietnamese of U.S. aid commodities. But I don't have the details on that.

Q: Were you able to get out and talk to Vietnamese in Saigon?

BOCK: Not very much. I did get up back to my old province on occasion. Sometimes I'd go up there on a Sunday if I knew that I wasn't going to have to work, and talk to the Vietnamese staff that I had gotten to know up there. Not to any significant extent in Saigon.

Q: Particulary the time you were with Bunker, this was the time of Vietnamization. We were beginning to draw down our troops. This was the Nixon Doctrine.

BOCK: Yes, and negotiations were going on in Paris, too.

Q: Yes. Was there any disquiet about our getting out of there, moving our troops out?

BOCK: I would say from the embassy perspective, very little. I think to the extent there was disquiet it was with what was going on in Paris in terms of cease-fire negotiations and what restrictions would come out of that. As you will remember, there was eventually a real standoff between Nixon and Thieu. Actually, in the early negotiations, between Johnson and Thieu, but later on with Nixon as well. The embassy was clearly reflecting to some extent Thieu's concerns about some of those issues such as how fast we would have to withdraw. But in terms of the ongoing withdrawal which had been put in place in '69 or '70, I didn't sense any particular qualms about that. Of course, these cross-border operations, both Cambodia and Laos, were designed to set the stage for that, too, and to the extent they were successful, as Cambodia initially was, that helped. If they weren't successful, as Laos was not really, then that raised alarm bells.

Q: As a Foreign Service officer put in this sort of unique situation, what were you looking at towards whither Rick Bock? Were promises made?

BOCK: No promises. People always talked a good game. "This will be good for your career." In those days, there was a pretty standard pattern for junior Foreign Service officers, which was, of your first three assignments, two would be abroad and one would be in Washington. Vietnam was my second overseas assignment. I had not yet been assigned to Washington. So there was a general understanding, which I don't think I ever questioned, that I would be assigned to Washington. And I was. So, then it was just a question of what office in the Department.

Q: When you left there in April-ish 1971, whither South Vietnam?

BOCK: I think the focus tended to be on how would these cease-fire negotiations pan

out? Could there be something put in place which would really remove the North Vietnamese regular units from the South? If that was the case, then I think the general consensus in Saigon was that at least then the Thieu government had a decent shot at surviving, no guarantees certainly. So the focus tended to be on what was going on in Paris.

Q: Was there any concern that the Nixon people were in to get us the hell out of there no matter what and what might be equivalent to a sellout?

BOCK: I don't remember that specifically. There may have been.

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Q: We're going to have to repeat a little of this. You came back to Washington. You went to the French desk. What was your job there?

BOCK: I was the junior officer on the French desk. It was part of the Office of Western European Affairs, which covered France and the Benelux countries so that you had an office director and a deputy director and a French desk officer with his junior person, which was me, and a Benelux desk officer with his junior person, so there were six officers. I was sort of at the bottom of the pile.

Q: In Bremen, you were off to one side. Did you get any feel for the EUR officer type? Were there people who sort of specialized in this? Was this a special breed?

BOCK: Well, there definitely was a kind of a French club. I think from my perspective at that point, I was more aware of that than a general EUR club. To some extent, the people I worked with in Washington, but also I got to know the people at the embassy, whenever they'd come in for consultations; I actually made two visits to the embassy as well, our embassy in Paris. There definitely were people who had spent as much of their career as possible in France.

Q: Did this appeal to you?

BOCK: Yes and no. Having had two tours abroad, one of them in Europe and one of them in Asia, I looked with favor on the idea of having that kind of broader experience rather than being more narrowly specialized in one country or close group of countries.

Q: We're talking about the role of France. You were saying the relationship was sort of prickly.

BOCK: Yes. This was a Gaullist government. It was a government of President Pompidou, who was the immediate successor and protégé of De Gaulle. The French considered themselves as playing a world role. That got them into positions where they would have a view on what the United States was doing all over the place. There were a lot of people in the U.S. government that didn't appreciate that even though the French outlook on almost all major policy issues was quite similar to our own. So, there was

often a considerable amount of tension between various parts of the U.S. government and what the French were doing, and the French desk often got caught in the middle trying to explain the French to the rest of the bureaucracy and to try to point out the larger picture, which put the French desk at the risk of being apologists for the French, which is not all that untypical.

Q: The French-American relationship has always been an interesting one.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: You were saying you got involved with the French-American relationship in Africa?

BOCK: Yes. A lot of my time was spent on French actions in areas other than Europe because the more senior people would be dealing with European issues. The French had this whole network of client states in Africa. There were those that had been unilaterally handed independence to in 1958 or 1960. They were very protective of that and did not look with favor on U.S. meddling in any of those countries, which we rarely did in those days. But we were at the same time very interested in what they were doing. So, I spent a good deal of time trying to keep track of those issues. To the extent that there were offices in the State Department and elsewhere interested in that, informing people of what the French were doing and how this might impact on our own interests.

Q: We're talking about maybe the French trait of enjoying sticking their thumb into the American eye.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: As an irritant and enjoying it. But also there is the American trait of, if you put an embassy in a country, Americans aren't going to just sit there and sip wine and look around them. They want to get involved in making the government better and putting in more wealth. In other words, we're activists.

BOCK: Sure.

Q: So even if our policy is really to just observe, I've documented by the people I've talked to about what they did in Chad or what they did in Senegal or something like that. They can't help themselves.

BOCK: Yes, the French did not look with favor.

Q: Well, maybe this is our way of sticking our thumb in their eye?

BOCK: Yes, I guess. I think from the perspective of the French desk, we didn't worry too much about that. We worried more about the other side of it.

Q: Could you talk about how the French seemed to work within the Washington area? Some embassies come in and they think, "Well, if you deal with the State Department, this is how you do it." Well, a sophisticated embassy knows that the State Department is almost a minor player. It's the White House, it's Congress, it's the Pentagon, and the media, and other areas, too.

BOCK: Well, yes. The French had, of course, a very large embassy. They were interested in just about everything the U.S. was doing in the world and they had people accordingly focused across the board. They did help foster and cultivate a kind of a Franco-American caucus, a group in Congress at that time which looked from time to time at Franco-American relations. Often these things are excuses to go on trips, but at least they provided a bit of a focus and the French embassy certainly helped out with that. The French government was organized a little bit like ours in the sense that they had within the presidential office officials who also dealt with foreign policy. They didn't rely only on their foreign ministry. So, they found it fairly easy to relate to our National Security Council system and they used it so that there were definitely contacts there. This was the time when Kissinger was National Security Advisor, so there were things that we on the desk didn't even know about.

Q: Unlike most other countries, the "intellectuals" in France play a major role in help setting tone and so on. Was somebody monitoring them? I assume the embassy would keep track. And the intellectuals for the most part come out of the left and are somewhat anti-American.

BOCK: They weren't being monitored in any very specific way, but we had a very large and active internal political section in the embassy and they were certainly reporting on this kind of thing. Of course, the major issue at this time still tended to be Vietnam. The French, having failed in Vietnam, were all the more inclined to be critical of what we were doing. Other people were critical who didn't have that excuse. And they were also in a way hosting the cease-fire negotiations. So the French were very much involved both to some extent as a government and certainly in the general political sense of commenting on and in some cases making more difficult our efforts to solve the Vietnam situation. I'm not sure there were very many NATO issues involving the French at that time. They had pulled out of NATO and that was kind of a plateau or the opposite of a plateau.

Q: I know you went off again to Vietnam. But before we get to that, the other major thing that happened during the time you were there and maybe when you were in Vietnam was the so-called "October War" of 1973 between Israel and Egypt and all, which stirred up all sorts of things, including close confrontation with the Soviet Union and then oil prices went erratic and all that.

BOCK: That was after my time on the French desk, so I can't comment on that from a French perspective at all.

Q: You went out to Vietnam for a while. Why did you go out?

BOCK: When the cease-fire negotiations were finally coming to fruition, they required a very rapid withdrawal of virtually all American military forces. We still had a defense attaché and that kind of thing. The U.S. government determined, I think fairly early on because I picked up rumors of this, that they wanted to have people in the field, "cease-fire watchers," to replace all these various advisory teams that had been out there and which were going to be withdrawn – not replacing, they wouldn't be anywhere near the same numbers. So, the idea that eventually came up was to recruit people who had former experience in Vietnam – if possible, Vietnamese speakers – anywhere they could find them in the Department or in embassies elsewhere and send them off as soon as this thing kicked in. So, I was among the many people who were asked to go out on a TDY to Vietnam to do this and I said, "Yes."

Q: You used the term "recruit," but it was more than recruit in some cases, wasn't it?

BOCK: It was more than recruit. It would have been very difficult for an individual officer to say, "No, I won't go." However, there was a balancing act in terms of where they were coming from because their current offices were often in a position to say, "No, we simply can't spare him" and that was particularly true at embassies abroad. So, not everybody who was on the initial list went and often because of that.

Q: But you were in Washington… Somebody could come charging down the hall from the higher reaches and say, "What do you mean you're stopping this man?"

BOCK: Yes. But I was very willing. I think most of the people who came up for this were also willing in the sense that they had had their Vietnam tour. It wasn't like three years, four years earlier when you had these junior officer classes coming in and being dumped willy nilly into Vietnam, which caused a great deal of heartburn. This was people who could see what it was about, who were also thinking, "Cease-fire. This is a big deal." Trying to see if the cease-fire is going to take hold is also a big deal.

Q: When you heard about the agreement, what was your initial reaction?

BOCK: I'm having to guess because my memory isn't that clear on it, but I think I was pleased that they finally reached an agreement coupled with a certain amount of skepticism as to whether it was going to work or not. But it was clear to me that the only way we were going to be able to settle Vietnam was through some kind of an agreement. I had no way of knowing whether this one was going to work or not, but I was pleased that people higher up seemed to think it was.

Q: You went out and were there for how long? Where were you?

BOCK: The assignment was for six months, although I only stayed for four. I was assigned back to Region III, which was now a consulate general rather than a military region. It was the consulate general of Bien Hoa. I was assigned initially to the same

province I had been in before with responsibility for a second province, Binh Long, which was up along the Cambodian border and had only isolated pockets of government control. It was largely forested and to some extent rubber plantation area which had been overrun by the North Vietnamese in 1972 during their big offensive and was still largely under their control. So, there were only limited things one could do.

Q: What was the situation in your two provinces?

BOCK: There was the difference between Binh Duong, which was largely under government control, and Binh Long, which I just described. There were liaison offices being set up between the South and the North Vietnamese. These existed in Binh Long. The International Control Commission to monitor the cease-fire was being formed and eventually they had a couple of teams in this area, one in Binh Long and one down in Binh Duong. These were the Poles, Hungarians, Indonesians, and Iranians, at least initially. So, in terms of monitoring what was going on, part of the task was to see how these ICC teams were working and, if they were having difficulties, to report back to a higher headquarters and make sure that somebody got on it and tried to work through the problems.

Q: Who was your consul general?

BOCK: Bob Walkinshaw was the consul general. I think he was relatively recently arrived, but I'm not sure.

Q: How did you get about and what did you do? What did you see?

BOCK: Well, I was again going out and talking to Vietnamese government people, to any sort of non-government people that I could identify. There were some political party representatives around that I could see. I tried to gather as much information as we could on attitudes towards the cease-fire, whether there was any low-level fighting going on. And then talking to the International Control Commission people. How did we get around? My memories of that relatively short period are not as good as my earlier tour. In Binh Duong, I drove pretty much around like I had before. To get to Binh Long, however, you had to fly. That was a bit of a challenge because one result of the cease-fire agreement was that all the military transportation was pulled out as well. During my previous tour, if you wanted to go somewhere, you'd place an order for a helicopter and you'd get a military chopper to come and pick you up and take you where you wanted to go. Well, those were all gone. That responsibility was turned over to Air America, which was flying fixed wing for a while and was now flying choppers as well. I do have a very specific memory of going into Binh Long the first time and realizing that this Air America pilot didn't know where he was going. He was taking me to some place I definitely did not want to go. He was guiding himself by the wrong road. I had to sort of set him straight.

Q: What would happen if you landed in the wrong place? Were there places that you just

couldn't go? Supposedly, if it's an open country, you could go anywhere you wanted.

BOCK: Yes, that wasn't open country. It wasn't anywhere near an open country. On the road leading north from Saigon through Binh Duong Province, once you got to the north end of the province heading up into Binh Long, there were Viet Cong checkpoints there. No American would go through them. No Vietnamese government official would go through them. I don't know what would have happened, but I'm sure if you ended up in a situation like that, you would at least have been held and there would have been problems resolving it, so it was something that we were very much under instruction not to try to wander our way into non-government held territory.

Q: What were you getting from the people you were talking to about the situation? Here we're looking towards setting up a country and the situation is such that you've got major foreign troops in that country hostile to it.

BOCK: Yes. It was all pretty tentative during the time I was out there. There was no major fighting that I can remember anywhere in the region, certainly not in my area. Getting the cease-fire mechanisms set up was slow and difficult. There were all these nice things in the agreement which said "These liaison offices will be established in such and such. The ICC will be established in such and such." None of that worked particularly well. So, during the four months I was there, I would say most of the focus was on just trying to get the mechanisms to work. My role was not to get them to work but to try to find out where they were breaking down and to describe the situation so that people could do something about it.

Q: Was the ICC in place when you were there?

BOCK: They were in place in Saigon. They were very slow in getting out into the boonies, but they were getting there. They were certainly everywhere by the time I left.

Q: How were they seen?

BOCK: I don't think they were considered all that effective. They were useful in the sense that they were a restraint or a constraint of some sort on hostile activity on either side. But it's the same kind of situation with UN peacekeeping. If you've got a peace to keep, these people would serve a useful purpose. If you don't have a peace to keep, they're not going to help much. That was pretty much what you had in Vietnam and we didn't know whether we had a peace to keep or not; it was that tentative.

Q: Among people that you knew, was this cease-fire seen as a fig leaf to get us uninvolved or was it considered to be serious?

BOCK: It was increasingly seen as a fig leaf. You will remember the context here, that Nixon as part of the cease-fire tried to include a very large military aid program to South Vietnam and that was overruled in Congress, so that we went into the cease-fire with the

signal from Congress that South Vietnam was to a considerable extent on its own. There were supposedly real constraints in terms of weapons and ammunition, something I can't really judge. But there was certainly a strong psychological component to this where the Vietnamese tended to more and more think that they were on their own. Of course, once probes by the North Vietnamese forces started toward the end of '74, or maybe the summer of '74, that led to the fairly rapid collapse, at least the psychological collapse, of the military. That all happened after I left, but I began to see the beginnings of that psychology there.

Q: Were you able to be a dispassionate observer to this or was there a problem speaking the language, getting out and all, identification and all this?

BOCK: I think that I was hopeful that the thing would work. To what extent that colored my views at the time, I don't know. It might have. Having spent that much time in Vietnam, I really wanted to think it would work.

Q: You left there a little early? Why? What did you do?

BOCK: Well, there was this massive sending out of people. Then after a while it became clear that maybe not that many people were needed. Rumors started flying that they were going to draw down this- (end of tape)

I was planning on getting married that summer. At this point, I knew I was going into language training immediately thereafter. So, I had an incentive to get back in enough time to arrange the wedding, have time for a honeymoon, and begin language training. So, when word came out that they were going to be draw people down, I said I wouldn't mind leaving a month or two early.

Q: What was the background of your to-be wife? Where did you meet her?

BOCK: We had met when I was on the French desk in my Washington assignment. It had nothing to do with the French desk. I met her at a party given by a mutual friend. She was from the Philippines, had come to Washington with the Philippine embassy but after some years had moved to the World Bank. She was a World Bank employee by the time I met her. We had started dating the summer of '72. By the time I knew I was going back to Vietnam, we had gotten engaged.

Q: Was she an American citizen at this point?

BOCK: She was not, because she had come over with a foreign embassy and then transferred directly to the World Bank. Whether there was an advantage to being a foreign national there or not, I'm not sure, but there was no great incentive to change. So, she had not made any move to become an American citizen and we had to work all that out before I eventually went overseas.

Q: Language training. What type of language?

BOCK: It was Chinese. After I finished my regular tour in Vietnam, I was not quite sure what I wanted to do with the rest of my career. The French desk was fine, but, you know, where do I go from here? I think, having been in Vietnam triggered an interest in East Asia. If you were going to be in East Asia, China was the top banana.

Q: By this time, we were just opening up to China.

BOCK: Yes and no. The Kissinger secret visit had taken place. So, we were in the process of opening up. At the time I applied for Chinese language training, we had no people stationed in China. By the time I started it in 1973, we were just opening a liaison office there. So, the question of what this would mean in terms of concrete assignment was very much in flux, but there was already the big China watching operation in Hong Kong. There was also Taiwan. There were lots of places to go.

Q: And also as you started there must have been a certain sense of excitement. Generation after generation of language students had gone through with the idea of eventually we're going to go into China and it was actually happening on your watch.

BOCK: That's right, and that became stronger as I went along. However much of a factor it was when I applied for language training, it certainly was a factor by the time I was in it. There was very much that sense.

Q: Was it a year here and-

BOCK: A year here and then a year in Taiwan.

Q: How did you find Chinese?

BOCK: Well, probably more difficult than I expected. As I think I had mentioned earlier, I did not have that much difficulty learning Vietnamese. I did pretty well in it. I figured, Chinese is another language, but another language from the same region. There is some relationship to Vietnamese. How difficult can it be? With the whole business of the characters, however, that was an entirely new dimension and that caused me a certain amount of struggle. Plus, and it may just have been the teaching method, but there seemed to be more need to deal with grammar in Chinese than there was in Vietnamese. So it was not easy.

Q: You were taking Chinese when?

BOCK: '73-'74 in Washington and '74-'75 in Taiwan.

Q: On Taiwan, how many were in your class?

BOCK: There must have been 20-something, maybe about 25, which was a mix of Foreign Service, military, various intelligence agencies, USIA…

Q: Was there a conscious beefing up of people learning Chinese?

BOCK: I don't think it had really gotten much beefed up yet. The large classes started later. We had in my Washington class seven people. It was a slightly different mix in Taichung. There were eight or nine State Department people, so this was not a big group. That did come later. I think there was still great uncertainty as to the amount of staffing we were going to be doing on the mainland.

Q: How did you find Taichung?

BOCK: I enjoyed Taichung. It was then still kind of a small town, although it wasn't actually that small. There were 100,000 people, I'm sure, but it had a small town atmosphere. It allowed one to experience Chinese society certainly in contrast to Washington, but also in contrast to Taipei.

Q: Did you get any feel for how the Taiwanese were feeling about the change in relationship now that we had some type of relation with Mainland China?

BOCK: There was a certain amount of nervousness, but I wouldn't say it was that striking. Our relationship then with Taiwan was still pretty much unchanged. We still had military all over the place. There was an Air Force contingent, an air base, outside Taichung. On the ground, things really hadn't changed and all this was something kind of on the horizon that some people thought and worried about but they didn't have to deal with yet.

Q: How did your wife feel about China, coming from the Philippines? Was there chemistry one way or another?

BOCK: No, I don't think so. The one thing that she felt immediately was the inability of the local people in Taiwan to sense that she wasn't Chinese and that was a considerable frustration. We had wonderful three party conversations where we'd go together to some place, a restaurant or a market, and I'd try to say something in Chinese and the answer would come back in Chinese to her, not to me. Of course, she couldn't deal with it because it was only after we got to Taichung that she started to learn the language.

Q: Yes, this is always a problem. Were your teachers pretty disciplined or were you getting what amounted to political indoctrination by osmosis?

BOCK: In Washington, there was a very small Chinese staff, three teachers for most of the year I was there. All of them were of Mainland origin. That was necessary for the language aspect. All of them had in some sense fled. They were all native Mandarin speakers, so I think they were all born on the Mainland. So, there was a certain amount of

anti-communism which came through. However, only one of the three was associated with the Taiwan government. Her husband was a retired Taiwan diplomat. The other two, I think, were probably as excited as any of us about the idea that there was going to be a U.S.-China relationship. That was here in Washington.

In Taiwan, you had somewhat different things. There, there was at least one teacher who was pretty strongly Kuomintang. But on the other hand, they realized that most of us were either going to be going to China or to Hong Kong and that we needed to learn everything we could about Mainland China. So, we were learning the Mainland Chinese. To the extent that there are differences of expressions used on the Mainland and Taiwan, we were learning those. So, while we were picking up some of the Taiwan perspective, it was not dominant by any means.

Q: Were you getting any feel about the schism between the native Taiwanese and the Mainland Chinese who came over in '48?

BOCK: I think at that time it was something I was vaguely aware of, but our focus was so much on learning about what was happening in China proper that except for those people who knew they were going to the embassy in Taipei, and only one or two were, that wasn't something we were focused on.

Q: Who else was in the class with you?

BOCK: Let's see… There was Gene Martin. We went together to Hong Kong. There was Joe Snyder, who was assigned to one of the third country positions in KL. Ward Barmon, who went to another third country position in Bangkok. Pat Wardlaw, who went directly to Beijing – Peking as we called it in those days. Jan de Wilde, who went to Taipei. One of the people I studied with here but not in Taipei was John Tkacik. He was a more junior person and they had a system of putting junior officers in the Taipei consular section with only one year's language training, then giving them a second year afterwards.

Q: Were there any women in the group?

BOCK: There were no State Department women. There was a USIA couple, Bill and Pat Ayres. Bill passed away a little bit ago. He was going to Taipei and that was his last assignment. She was younger and stayed in the service a while longer. One of the security contingent was also a woman, a real flake if I can say so. I won't mention her name.

Q: What was your assignment?

BOCK: In those days, we didn't have assignments at the outset. It was like an A100 course. You got most of the way through before you knew where you were going. My assignment was Hong Kong.

Q: Okay. I think this is a good place to stop now. We'll pick this up in 1975.

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Today is June 24, 2002. Rick, you got to Hong Kong and were there from '75 to when?

BOCK: I was only there for a year. But the assignment was supposed to be much longer than that.

Q: What was the situation in Hong Kong when you got there?

BOCK: Of course, the famous Nixon trip to China had taken place. Following that, a liaison office had been established in Peking in 1973, just two years prior to my arrival. So we had a very small establishment in China itself. Hong Kong was still at that point the major China watching post, although people were starting to think about how to handle that in the future, how much to transfer up to Peking. But most of the analytical reporting on developments in China was still coming out of Hong Kong and that was the function we had there.

Q: In Hong Kong at that time, the reversion to China was…

BOCK: Oh, that was far in the future. The negotiations had not started on that. Reversion itself took place in 1998, but the negotiations started sometime in the '80s.

Q: Were people talking about this at all?

BOCK: No, it wasn't a serious subject yet. What triggered it eventually was the expiration of the 99 year lease on Kowloon, but that was still reasonably far in the future.

Q: When you went there, were you a China watcher?

BOCK: I was a brand new China watcher. We had a China watching section consisting of about eight people divided into an economic and a political side. On the political side, there were three of us looking at Chinese internal politics largely by analyzing broadcasts which had been picked up by either FBIS or the British and some other materials, including some Mainland Chinese newspapers.

Q: The local press in China was quite important, wasn't it?

BOCK: The press was important, but the broadcasts were more accessible. The "People's Daily," of course, was available to everybody. But that was very tightly controlled.

Q: If you could get hold of it, the City Press would tell what was happening in the provinces.

BOCK: That was much harder to do because there was relatively little travel to the

provinces by any foreigners.

Q: What was going on in China when you were there in '75-'76?
BOCK: Well, it was still considered the Cultural Revolution period, although it was kind of in the winddown phase. Mao Zedong was still in charge, but his health was extremely poor. About a year prior to my arrival, Zhou En-lai had died. He had been not always officially number two but was de facto number two for much of the period since 1949 and had been generally considered both by outsiders and Chinese as kind of a moderating influence on Mao. The spring before I arrived, there had been a violent demonstration in Tiananmen Square in honor of Zhou En-lai but, in effect, protesting radical influence in the Chinese government. So, there were definitely signs that this was kind of the end of the regime in some sense with a succession coming up and a lot of uncertainty. So, there was a lot of interest in the western analytical community as to how this was going to play out.

Q: In effect, was the Gang of Four running things?

BOCK: The Gang of Four was pretty much running things. Deng Xiao-ping had been rehabilitated out of his exile to a potato farm in 1973 but had again disappeared in 1975 or '74. So, that was seen as a sign that the Gang of Four, as they subsequently became known, their influence was rising.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the consulate general. Who was the consul general? How did you see it operating?

BOCK: Well, Chuck Cross was consul general for the period I was there. It's a big consulate, of course. It functioned very much like an embassy. We had a consul general, a deputy. We had a China watching section and a separate economic section for Hong Kong and a big consular section, an administrative section. We had, in effect, military attaches. It was called a Defense Liaison Office. But it was big. It was the size of most major country attaché offices. We had the other things – USIA and so on. So, it was a major establishment.
Q: Did you have the feeling that the China watchers were sort of invigorated by the fact that we were beginning to open up to China? Prior to that, you had had Hong Kong, Taipei, and maybe the China guy in Burma or Indonesia or something like that.

BOCK: Yes. It was a little difficult for me to make comparisons because I was very new to the China watching business. But for people who had been doing it longer, there was certainly a sense of excitement that now you could actually get into China after, in some cases, many years of standing outside peering in.

Q: Did you get into China?

BOCK: No, not during that year. We had a very limited program of trips up to the liaison office in Peking. I think the idea was to minimize the burden on the small staff there. The

expectation was that during any three year tour in Hong Kong, you'd get up at least once, but I was not at the top of the list, of course, so I didn't make it.

Q: What piece of the action were you looking at?

BOCK: To the best of my memory, we had divided up the provinces geographically and I was looking at the southern provinces. Then several functional issues, too, but I'm not sure I can remember exactly what the functional issues were. But I think they changed a little bit during the course of the year.

Q: Were you seeing at that time a difference between particularly the coastal southern provinces compared to other parts of China? This has become and is now the hotbed of economic movement. Was any of that around?

BOCK: Well, not in the same sense. You still had virtually no outside influence in China and it's the outside influence subsequently which has caused so much of this disparity between the coast, which gets the outsiders, and the interior, which doesn't. There were individual hotbeds. I can remember the city of Wenzhou, which is in South China, where they were doing all sorts of not necessarily authorized experiments of one sort or another. There were other individual cases, but you couldn't generalize geographically.

Q: You learned Mandarin?

BOCK: I had learned Mandarin.

Q: Were you able to use it in Hong Kong?

BOCK: To a limited extent. Most of the Hong Kong citizens in those days didn't speak Mandarin. We had some contact with the unofficial PRC representatives there. They had a Xinhua News Agency office which was, in effect, the Chinese Communist Party headquarters for Hong Kong. They were there under semi-official guise and you would interact with them a little bit also with some of the communist press, which were also essentially Mainland based. They all spoke Mandarin. There were other Mandarin speakers here and there that we would have access to, but not very much. I was reading it all the time but not speaking it.

Q: How was the U.S. being played in the press and in broadcast?

BOCK: We were still the hegemonists. I would be hardpressed to remember the specific issues involved, but generally speaking, it was a fairly hostile treatment of the United States. Of course, we still had our defense treaty with Taiwan at the time.

Q: Did the China-Vietnam war take place while you were there?

BOCK: That was later.

Q: Were we looking at that?

BOCK: We had in the consulate a person who was looking at Indochina in particular. There were two Indochina watchers overseas in the Foreign Service at that time, one based in Hong Kong and one based in Bangkok. We still had kind of a rough embassy in Laos, I think, but we were out of Saigon, we were not in Hanoi, we were not in Phnom Penh. His job, however, was more to look at what was happening in Vietnam itself than particular issues involving China-Vietnam relations. I should have mentioned that in the organization of the China watching division in Hong Kong, we also had an external relations section with two people. They would have been looking at that to the extent anyone was.

Q: Were we thinking of China being an aggressive power or one that was likely to implode?

BOCK: I think that was starting to change. We had, of course, looked at China as an aggressive power, particularly during the Cultural Revolution and then with respect to Vietnam. That was part of our motivation for the war. With the Nixon trip and the subsequent developments, we were obviously trying to build a relationship with China which would serve our interests. And we hoped that this could be done on the basis of a non-aggressive China.

Q: Did we have much contact with what you were doing with the British?

BOCK: They were doing the same thing we were. Of course, they ran Hong Kong. The governor was pretty much focused on running Hong Kong, but he had a senior political advisor and at least one junior political advisor and that shop tended to do a good deal of China watching. And we had a good deal of contact with them.

Q: How did you find life there?

BOCK: Oh, I loved Hong Kong. It's such a scenic city. The whole shopping and restaurant atmosphere was so interesting. I think some people eventually got kind of an island fever from Hong Kong because you couldn't get across the border and if you wanted to go anywhere, you had to take a plane out. But I don't think we were affected by that in our year there. We always had enough to do.

Q: Was one hearing any complaints about the lack of American troops coming through? This must have generated a lot of business.

BOCK: There was still a lot of American navy coming through. In fact, during part of the time, part of that year we were there, my wife got a job with the Navy credit union down in Wanchai. So, I was well aware through her every time one of these big aircraft carriers or frigates came through because there was a flood of people coming in to get their

money. That happened on a very regular basis.

Q: Was anybody prognosticating whither China?

BOCK: Well, a lot of people were trying to. Whether there was any consensus about it, I'm not sure. Everybody was kind of waiting for Mao Zedong to die to see what was going to happen.

Q: Did Taiwan have any influence at all?

BOCK: Little. There were pockets of Kuomintang loyalists in Hong Kong, but they were controlled fairly tightly by the British. The British had enough problems with China. They didn't need a Taiwan problem. So, there was this Kuomintang organization. Later there were semi-official Taiwan representatives there. I'm not sure what there was in 1975.

Q: Had the British started to Chineseify the administration there?

BOCK: I'm not sure how well I remember that. They certainly had a number of Hong Kong Chinese in their administration. I'm reasonably sure that the chief secretary was still British. In fact, I think he was British up until near the transfer.

Q: What I recall is that the British were pretty slow about working this out.

BOCK: Yes, I don't think they were in a real hurry. I suppose from the British point of view, they had to watch both sides of this. If they went toward an indigenization of the structure, that could be interpreted by the Chinese in Peking as saying, "Ah-hah, they're preparing for Hong Kong independence." That would get the British in trouble with the Chinese. So, that, I suspect, was one factor in their thinking of not going too fast.

Q: A transitionary period is always a difficult one.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: You left there within a year. Were there any major developments in China or in Hong Kong while you were there?

BOCK: I don't remember anything really earth shattering during that year.

Q: In 1976…

BOCK: What happened is, when I was in Hong Kong, this was the time that George Bush, Senior, was the liaison chief in Peking. He left then the spring of 1976. He had gone out there with his own private secretary and the State Department had created a slot for her. So, he had her, Jennifer Fitzgerald, as well as a State Department secretary assigned to him. When he left, the bureau cast a covetous look at that slot and said,

"We're not going to give another liaison office chief two secretaries. Let's turn that into an officer slot." So they created a new officer slot and cast around for somebody to fill it as a part-time special assistant. My boss in Hong Kong was Don Anderson, who had just a year earlier come out of Peking. I guess he recommended me. So, on very short notice, I was asked would I like to go to Peking and I couldn't say no.

Q: You were off to Peking in 1976.

BOCK: The summer of 1976.

Q: How long were you there?

BOCK: Almost three years. Hong Kong was my first real assignment with my wife. My wife was less enthusiastic about going to Peking than I was.

Q: I was going to say, it would take a hell of a lot of diplomacy to take a new wife from the fleshpot of Hong Kong and go to the more austere Beijing.

BOCK: It wasn't so much that. She was game. But I mentioned she had had this temporary job at the credit union. She subsequently got a job as office manager for a major architectural firm in Hong Kong and was just starting on that job when this Peking assignment came up. So, her view of it was a little bit colored by that.

Q: How did Beijing strike you when you got there?
BOCK: Well, you'd have to imagine somebody who's been a China watcher and never seen China. Again, this image of peeping over the fence and then all of a sudden you're there. There is a good deal of excitement getting there and actually seeing the place. By that time, I knew a good deal what to expect, I guess. So, I'm not sure there were any tremendous surprises. But there was certainly a sense of excitement about being in the middle of it.

Q: Who was our liaison officer?

BOCK: It was Tom Gates, who had been Secretary of the Army, I think, under Eisenhower. I think he had been briefly either Defense Secretary or Deputy Secretary. He was a Philadelphia banker. He was well on in years but a very sensible guy and very personable. In the sense of presiding over a very isolated mission, he had an awful lot of good qualities. He was kind of a father figure.

Q: In real terms, this probably made sense, but I was wondering whether the calculation was that Henry Kissinger didn't want anybody who knew anything about his particular sandbox to get in there and maybe have too big a role.

BOCK: I don't know. That's certainly possible. There had been all sorts of machinations over the original makeup of that liaison office to the extent that you had two deputies

whose functions were totally undefined and apparently at loggerheads. That was all over by the time I arrived. So, yes, I suppose that could have played a role.

Q: One does have the feeling Henry Kissinger and his crew looked upon this as being their particular place.

BOCK: There's no question that Kissinger had a lot of personal stake in the whole operation there.
You were asking me my impressions of Peking. They were skewed by the fact that the second night we were there, still in a hotel, the 8.2 Richter Tangshan earthquake took place, which eventually – not right away; I think it took a day – resulted in the evacuation of all or virtually all Peking residents from where they lived. Everybody was out in the street. We were all regrouped at the liaison office building, where the GSO [general services officer] dug out mattresses and spread them out on the ground floor everywhere. After a couple of days, all the dependents were sent abroad. The Chinese government was totally consumed with this. But of course they weren't telling anybody what had happened. In fact, I have a very vivid memory. The earthquake took place at two or probably three o'clock in the morning. We shook a lot in the hotel. We didn't go out in the street. My wife asked me, "Should we leave?" I said, "Well, they'll tell us if we need to" and they didn't, so I said, "Well, let's go back to sleep" and we did. Then I got a phone call from one of my colleagues a couple hours later saying, "Are you still in the hotel?" I said, "Yes. Where are you?" "We're out in the street." I said, "What are you doing out in the street at 5:00 AM?" Anyway, we got out. We were wondering whether the hotel dining room was going to open for breakfast. It did. Once it did, we went in for breakfast. This colleague of mine ran upstairs and got his shortwave radio and brought it down, tuned into BBC or VOA to get information on the earthquake. All the Chinese waiters gathered around because there was zero information in the Chinese media. This entire city had just been shaken apart and there was no news as to what was going on. You can imagine the kind of atmosphere at that time.

Q: You might describe what the earthquake was as far as distance and what the consequences were.

BOCK: It was centered near the industrial city of Tangshan maybe about 100 miles from Peking. It would be in the northeast direction. Peking is a little bit inland from the Bohai Gulf. If you go to the Bohai Gulf and then head north, eventually you hit Manchuria. On the way up is Tangshan. It was built on the site of a major coal seam. It was originally a coal mining city and then industry developed around it. It was a city of well over a million people, totally destroyed, totally destroyed. I was through it on the train a year later. You couldn't get off. What you saw was some temporary structures which were… At first, I couldn't understand what I was looking at because they seemed awfully high up off the street level. Then I realized that they had dug down, found the original street level, and anything else was on about six feet of rubble. Then you could still see some twisted metal around where some of the bigger buildings had been. So, Tangshan was destroyed. Tianjin, the port city near Peking, was fairly heavily damaged. Peking suffered some

damage, but not catastrophic. There were a lot of the older mud brick buildings which simply collapsed. Most of those were one story.

Q: These didn't kill as many people.

BOCK: They never came up with an official figure for how many were killed. Several years later, some Mexican seismological team was allowed to come in and do some kind of a survey and they came up with an estimate of 250,000 dead, which I think is the generally accepted figure now.

Q: How did our embassy and all react?

BOCK: Well, we were first of all trying to find out how bad the damage was and then to assess what the government was doing about it and what effect it was going to have on the government, which was very difficult to do. Sources of information were very limited. But it was almost like the China watching operation in Hong Kong. It was in little bits and pieces. At the same time, the liaison office had to worry about its own people. I mentioned all the dependents were sent out. Everybody was regrouped. And the entire functioning of the liaison office was pretty much changed. The Chinese government was not business as usual by any means, so the normal diplomatic duties were on hold. So, almost everybody in the liaison office was given the assignment of getting out and around, looking at what was happening in the city, whether there was unrest, get some idea of damage, and so on.

Q: Was the term "mandate of Heaven" being withdrawn, bandied about? My understanding is that when the dynasty is about to go, all Hell breaks loose – earthquakes, floods and all. With Mao on his last legs, I would think this would be some- (end of tape)

BOCK: The question of the mandate of Heaven was certainly being bandied around in the Western community, in the foreign community. Whether it was being done so among the Chinese was hard to know. I assume it was. But as I said, there was a lack of real access. The local feeling wasn't only anti-American. There was still a real isolationist atmosphere, a distrust of foreigners, permeating China. The ability to find Chinese who would sit down and discuss candidly their views on political subjects was almost zero. There were a few exceptions, but it was very difficult. They wouldn't discuss it among themselves for the most part.

Q: We're still talking about the time when the Gang of Four were running things. The Cultural Revolution was not over at that point.

BOCK: It was not over. What I possibly should have mentioned during the Hong Kong time - you asked about what was going on - is that this was the time of one of these periodic mass movements which were sponsored by the central regime which was called Pi Lin Pi Kong, literally "Criticize Lin Biao - Criticize Confucius," but "Confucius" was

generally understood to mean "Zhou En-lai." The focus was on criticizing the moderating elements of policy which were associated with Zhou En-lai. That was happening in early 1976 and was still kind of petering out maybe by the time we arrived in China, but that was the kind of atmosphere you were in.

Q: So, when you arrived there in '76, this was essentially not a warm, welcoming country.

BOCK: No, it was not. First of all, our status there was still kind of iffy. We were not part of the diplomatic corps. As a symbolic example, when the foreign ministry would organize some event for the diplomatic corps, we were not invited but then they would usually organize a similar event later just for us. On those occasions, we'd have a chance to chat with people from the foreign ministry. I can remember some conversations where you'd start talking to one of these guys and try to ask a little bit, something innocuous like "Are you married? Do you have children?" Couldn't get an answer. Some of them were so imbued with the sense that "I don't want to say anything that might get me in trouble."

Q: Were there posters… Had the poster campaign come and gone?

BOCK: In those initial weeks, there were really only official posters as far as I can remember. The big poster campaigns came later. Maybe we should move into that.

Q: Were the schools and institutions still pretty well shattered by sending all the young people off to the Gobi Desert, off to the countryside?

BOCK: They had brought people back. The educational institutions were functioning again, but they were functioning in an extremely politicized way. People were still being sent to the countryside, but not en masse, not emptying out universities, which happened in the late '60s. The system when we were there was that high school graduates had to spend a year in the countryside before they could get into university. But the universities and the high schools were functioning.

Q: Was the country putting itself back together again after dislocations of the Cultural Revolution?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: I take it that at this point you weren't having Chinese sitting down to tell you horrendous things that happened.

BOCK: No.

Q: Now there is a whole art form of these memoirs of the Cultural Revolution that are being written. I've read many of them.

BOCK: This started not too long thereafter. The key two events that triggered it were the death of Mao Zedong and then the purge of the Gang of Four, both of which happened in very rapid succession.

Q: Is there anything we should cover to set the stage before things started to happen?

BOCK: Probably not. We arrived in Peking in July. Mao died at the beginning of September. Everybody was still kind of under the influence of this horrific earthquake and then the old man's gone. And that was, of course, very interesting to watch. The Chinese were just in shock. This was a time when you really could tell what people were thinking. They were in shock. A lot of them may not have loved Mao Zedong, as all the propaganda would have it. But he had been in charge of the country for 27 years. It was very difficult to imagine a future without Mao Zedong. So, there were people just sort of wandering around almost dazed. There was an organized campaign of mourning, of course. There was a big gathering of hundreds of thousands of people in Tiananmen Square when they had the memorial service. But there was great uncertainty as to what was going to happen next.

Q: You were doing what at the embassy?

BOCK: I was sent up as a part-time special assistant. So, part of what I was doing was the administrative work, helping out the head of the liaison office. But otherwise, I was assigned to the political section. At the outset, I was doing some internal political work. Eventually, I did external, Chinese foreign relations reporting. But during those early months, most of us were focused on internal political matters.

Q: When Mao died, did we have a reporting plan? "Okay, Rick, you watch the lights in the Ministry of Defense…" Were we anticipating coups, countercoups, disturbances? Were we monitoring or just trying to see what happened?

BOCK: Well, we were monitoring things as well as we could. I don't remember anything quite as finely laid out as you're describing. But part of what we were doing was going out and looking for the so-called big character posters. Everyone knew this was the traditional way of, kind of a first indication that something was brewing. These things would go up. So, that as much as anything to do with lights on in a building was the focus of what we were doing.

Q: What happened?

BOCK: Well, within the course of… First of all, what initially happened was, official posters went up all over the place showing pictures of Mao Zedong and Hua Guofeng as his designated successor with an appropriate quote from Mao Zedong which said, "With you in charge, I am at ease." This was the regime's announcement to all concerned that the succession had been decided and it was Hua Guofeng. Hua Guofeng was a relatively recent addition to the top political circle and he had been in charge of some security functions in the past. But it was a little bit hard to believe that he had enough clout to

really keep everybody in line. He was not completely identified either with the radical wing, the Gang of Four, or the more moderate group around Zhou En-lai and Deng Xiao-ping. So, I think we were pretty skeptical that this was the end of the story. We were proved right about a month later. It was in October when small groups of people started marching down the main street, Chang An Jie, toward Tiananmen Square with their unit designation - everybody in China belonged to a unit, and so you'd get such and such office or such and such factory – denouncing the Gang of Four. And for about a day or two, it wasn't clear whether this was really the end of the Gang of Four or simply some kind of trial balloon or some attempt to provoke a movement. Then it snowballed. Soon, you had masses of people on the street calling for the arrest of the Gang of Four. Then in the period thereafter, you had huge displays of these big character posters, including some dredging up all sorts of horror stories from the Cultural Revolution, including both obscure people and people very high in the hierarchy who had been mistreated, in some cases hounded to death, and it was all being blamed on the Gang of Four, of course. The Gang of Four were Mao Zedong's widow and then three people from the Shanghai region who were allied with her.

Q: Was there a feeling that these parades… I mean, obviously, somebody was directing them, but was there real passion behind them? Was the Gang of Four that unpopular?

BOCK: Yes, it seemed quite clear that they were. The initial parades were a little bit tentative. But once it was clear that this really was a mass movement, there was a lot of passion in it. People were very willing to blame these four individuals for all sorts of things. In the Cultural Revolution, which lasted for nine or 10 years, everybody had had something bad happen to them, some more than others, but everybody had a grudge. It was a convenient target to bring all these things up against.

Q: As this was going through, was there any disquiet on the part of the Americans there that this thing could blow up or could cause other repercussions which might not be to our advantage or not?

BOCK: Well, I suppose there was a little bit of that in the background, that this could result in a total breakdown of authority, which would not have been welcomed. But I don't remember that being a terribly prominent concern. The whole rapprochement between the U.S. and China had been done under the auspices first of Zhou En-lai and then of Deng Xiao-ping. Mao Zedong, too, but Mao Zedong was kind of the emperor in the background and it was generally attributed to those two individuals. So, the question of who would take over for Mao and whether that would be somebody identified with the relationship with the U.S. was very much in the forefront of our government's thinking. To the extent that these radicals were being taken down from power, that was all to the good.

Q: I take it that we actually had no cards to play one way or the other. We were watching developments.

BOCK: Yes. First of all, we had no knowledge of the inner workings. Whatever

knowledge we had was always after the fact. We didn't have a current knowledge of what was going on. Whether there were people in Washington that had information which wasn't being made available, I don't know, but I suspect not. No, I never had the sense that we felt we could have much of an impact on this internal power struggle.

Q: How was our embassy foreign national staff responding to all this?

BOCK: That's an interesting question. Our foreign nationals were all, in effect, Chinese government employees. They were always at that time considered very - I don't like to use the word "suspect," but we always assumed they had their own reporting requirements. So one had to be very careful of what one said. On the other hand, you could talk to them. The reaction to the extent I can remember it was extreme caution when this stuff started up. But then increasing relief and excitement as it became clear that there was a change in direction going on. After all, given the fact that their loyalties were clearly with the Chinese government and not with us, the fact that they were in this business at all meant that they had some kind of a broader outlook usually.

Q: Were we getting much from the hinterland?

BOCK: Not a lot. The liaison office had a program of trying to get its officers out to the provinces on a very regular basis in order to just get a sense of at least that posters were going up and any other signs of political debate. It was very difficult to travel in China at that time. You couldn't drive significantly outside Peking except to a couple of tourist destinations. You had to go either by plane or by train. In order to get a plane or a train ticket, you had to have a special stamp from the foreign ministry. This meant that if you wanted to plan a trip, you would submit a wish list through channels to the foreign ministry and rely on them both to get the travel arrangements and the permission. It usually came a day or two in advance of when you planned to go. Then once you traveled, you were always met at the train station or at the airport by a China Travel Service guide who had made all the arrangements for you. So, it was all very controlled. But given those constraints, every few weeks, if not more often, somebody from the liaison office would be making a trip someplace if they could. Some areas you just couldn't get to. We couldn't get to Tibet in those days. You couldn't get to Xinjiang in the far west. Some other provinces were off-limits. But you never knew for sure what was off-limits and what wasn't. So, you would submit a travel itinerary, including a couple of places you felt pretty sure they would let you go to, and then throw in a couple that were much more iffy and see what you got.

Q: What was your wife doing? What were your living conditions?

BOCK: We started out in the hotel, rapidly were evacuated. Once everything settled down and family members came back, which only took a couple of weeks, we were back in the hotel for about a total of three months. Then we moved into one of the diplomatic apartments. The Chinese had built a large number of apartment buildings, mid to high rise, all in several compounds. The Diplomatic Service Bureau, which ran these things

and ran everything else concerning the foreign missions, would parcel these out on the basis of requests from the various embassies. So, it was always a little bit of a delay to get one, but at the time I was there, it wasn't too bad. Two or three years later, you had people going to Beijing to serve in the embassy and they would be in the hotel for a year or more. We were okay. We were in an apartment by October, I guess. It was a small two bedroom apartment in a high rise, not together with other Americans; we were the only Americans in that building. I think we had on our floor an Australian family, a Belgian woman, and a Hungarian couple. It was all mixed together. A few countries, a few embassies, had their own housing, particularly some of the Eastern European embassies, especially including the Russians, who had everything in one compound. Everyone else was on the arrangement that we were. I mentioned about travel. My wife and I did make a weeklong trip in October. It was just in the aftermath of the fall of the Gang of Four. Although we were doing touristy things, which was what we had to do for the China Travel Service, at the same time, I was trying to keep my eye out for demonstrations, for posters, and so on. We saw a lot of posters. These things were going up everywhere.

Q: Were we seeing much support for the Gang of Four?

BOCK: No, not much. A little bit. Some of the posters that would go up, for instance, would be very obscure. Upon analysis, it looked like some of them might actually be saying, "It's not really the Gang of Four that's at fault. It's somebody else." But by and large, not much of that.

Q: Were we able to monitor what the Chinese military was up to?

BOCK: I don't think we were able to monitor them very well from the liaison office. To what extent long distance monitoring was going on, I don't remember. I don't know if I was aware of any. I'm sure there were efforts to do that. We always kept our eye out for concentrations of troops or something like that, but that wasn't what we were seeing.

Q: When you were working with Gates, was he making representations to the Chinese? Were you going with him?

BOCK: Usually not. It would depend on the nature of the representation. Normally, if he went in, he would go either with his DCM or with a section chief, depending on the subject matter.

Q: Who was the DCM?

BOCK: The DCM at that time was David Dean, a longtime China hand, or Taiwan hand. He had also served in Hong Kong. For the entire time that Gates was there, Dean was the DCM.

Q: How was the election of '76 viewed? Were you getting any reflection on that either from our embassy's side or from the Chinese side? This was when Carter beat Ford.

BOCK: I can't say that I really remember much of an impact. I suspect there was some concern on the part of the Chinese because of the Carter emphasis on human rights. But I'm hard pressed to remember anything specific on that.

Q: There wasn't speculation on the Chinese that, okay, we're moving away from the Nixon-Kissinger period and we may be going back to the bad old days?

BOCK: There could have been. I really don't know. What rapidly became clear after Carter took office was that China policy was being pretty much run by Brzezinski, who with what I would characterize as a fairly strong anti-Russian bent, just looked at China through a fairly narrow strategic focus and saw this [strategic rapprochement] as somewhere we really want to go. I don't remember now how rapidly that became apparent, but once it did, the Chinese would have been fairly reassured that there wasn't going to be any big shakeup in the China policy.

Q: You were there from '76-'79.

BOCK: Yes. Gates was only there for about a year. He left as a result of the Carter election and was replaced the summer of '77 by Leonard Woodcock, who came out of the United Auto Workers, which on the surface seemed like a strange choice but ended up to be a pretty good one. We also had a change in that David Dean finished his tour and was replaced by Stape Roy.

Q: Did the Indochina-Vietnam-Chinese war cause any particular problems?

BOCK: We paid a lot of attention to it. That's getting a little ahead of the story because that came right on the heels of our own normalization with China. But it took place in early 1979. I was still there. One of my responsibilities was just to find out what I could about it, which wasn't a whole heck of a lot. The information available in Beijing was pretty slim on that. But we were following it the best we could. There was also a spinoff from that… I'm not quite sure of my timing on this. The Chinese incursion into Vietnam, of course, was a reaction to the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. I'd have to go back and check to see when exactly that took place. But the result of the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia was that Sihanouk showed up on our doorstep. We went through a period when the liaison office was the main channel of communication to Sihanouk. There was great turmoil in our own Indochina policy at that point.

Q: Let's go back. Carter came in. Was it expected that he would normalize relations?
BOCK: I don't know that there was an initial expectation in that regard. Eventually it became clear that he was working very hard to find a way to normalize. The Nixon and Ford administrations had wanted to normalize relations and the stumbling block was always how do you handle Taiwan. That was a very big bullet to bite. It wasn't until Carter that they finally determined they were going to bite the bullet and figured out a way to do it. But the desire for normalization was there throughout, I think.

Q: Were you seeing a changing attitude towards not only the embassy work but also towards the world with the Gang of Four being edged out?

BOCK: Yes. What you had along with the fall of the Gang of Four was a considerable criticism of the whole period of the Cultural Revolution, sometimes including criticism of Mao Zedong, although that was very touchy and didn't really get resolved (to the extent that it's been resolved at all) until after I had left. But the Cultural Revolution among other things was a time of extreme isolation on the part of the Chinese. To the extent that you were criticizing that, you were also by and large saying, "We need to interact more with the world." That was certainly taking place. Deng Xiao-ping did come back into power in mid-'77, I think, not too long after the fall of the Gang of Four. That was one of his roles, to bring China in some way more back into the world. This whole period was still characterized by very tense Chinese-Soviet relations. That hadn't really changed. So, bringing China back into the world was in a way looked upon as a kind of safeguard against any difficulties with the Soviets.

Q: Was Deng Xiao-ping sort of looked upon as a hero or "our boy?"

BOCK: By the Americans?

Q: Yes.

BOCK: To some extent, yes. I think that's fair. He was seen as a key to U.S.-China relations.

Q: Did we know a lot about Deng Xiaoping by that point?

BOCK: Not too much in personal terms. He had had some role in the establishment of the liaison office. He had [experience] in dealing with Americans to that extent during the '73-'74 period… His role prior to the Cultural Revolution and what he had gone through was also becoming known through Chinese sources. That was always getting published in one form or another. Of course, if you look back to Deng Xiao-ping in the 1950s, he doesn't come across as much of a reformer. He was a very hardline communist, which they all were. But I think more because of the dealings with him in the early '70s, he was seen as someone that we could usefully work with.

Q: Did we make any entrée into the universities while you were there?

BOCK: We began to. At the time I arrived, the only Americans, virtually the only foreigners, who were in the Chinese universities were the old true believers. There were still a handful of them left even after the Cultural Revolution, people who had seen Mao Zedong's revolution as the wave of the future and had tied themselves to it and stuck it out. They, of course, were very shy of dealing with the U.S. liaison office. That changed to some extent after normalization, after 1979. In addition to that, though, starting maybe

’77, the Chinese began to accept non-ideological people coming in, doing some teaching, began to accept the idea of academic exchanges. There had been no academic exchanges for a period of probably 20, maybe more, years. I do remember escorting a visiting American astronomical group and going around to various observatories in China with this group. It was amazing to watch. You had all these Chinese scientists who had had no contact not only with the United States but no contact with the West. Some of them had a little contact with the Soviet Union back in the ‘60s. They were just so pleased and so anxious to catch up with what was going on in the world. Now, that was in a scientific discipline. But it carried over to some extent everywhere in the academic world.

Q: Were you able to make any friendly contacts with artists or businesspeople?

BOCK: Very little in that period. That really started to loosen up in 1979, early ‘80s is when the big change came. Even though the government policy was clearly moving in the direction of better ties, I think on a private level, people were still very cautious.

Q: Well, they had gone through the 1,000 Flowers Campaign.

BOCK: Oh, they had gone through so many political campaigns and they knew that if you stuck your neck out, you were going to get it chopped off. Also until the spring of ’79, we had not yet normalized. We were an ally, if not “occupier,” of Taiwan. What was also happening, however, was a good deal of ferment. You may remember the period of the Democracy Wall. In the wake of Deng Xiao-ping being rehabilitated for the second time, there was a sense that there was going to be some real political changes in China and some people got out in front and started organizing a movement. We as a liaison office had some contact with those people. I did not. There were a couple of people who were handling that and I was not one of them. But that was going on. But it was still pretty limited. There were relatively few who were willing to stick their necks out to talk candidly about political subjects with Americans.

Q: Did you get any piece of the action or observation with the opening of official relations?

BOCK: I had only a very small piece of the action involving the negotiations. That was extremely closely held. I mean, we all knew people were working on it. Woodcock got his instructions from Washington through CIA channels directly from the NSC. They were not shared with anybody except the DCM. He went into a whole series of negotiations in the summer and fall of ’78, trying to cut this Taiwan knot basically. That was really the only thing that was left to resolve. I was aware that he was going in to see the foreign ministry and other people but I had no access to his instructions. The only exception was, one time he was given an instruction to go in and the DCM was away on leave. So, I was asked to accompany him. I was a little bit surprised because here I was in effect going around my boss, the political counselor. But I think because I had somewhat more access to certain things than he did that I guess they figured it made more sense for me to go along. I went along as a notetaker. This was not one of the crucial meetings. It

wasn't one where a breakthrough was being scored. But that gave me a little bit of a window into the process.

Q: Woodcock… Were you still acting somewhat as a special assistant?

BOCK: Yes. My job did not significantly change from Gates to Woodcock. He was asked whether he wanted to keep the same arrangement and he said, yes, that was fine with him.

Q: How did he use you?

BOCK: Several ways. One, kind of document culling stuff from the daily take, what comes in to be read. I figured out what was worth his while to read and what wasn't. He wanted to do some traveling around China. Gates had had a bad leg. He had some difficulty getting around. So, he did relatively little traveling during his period in China. Woodcock was quite vigorous and he wanted to get around. So, I would make arrangements, accompany him on trips, including one amusing trip to an automobile factory in Manchuria. Here was the head of the United Auto Workers and he was going to a Chinese automobile factory. Just watching his reaction… He said, "Jesus, this is 1920s technology." So, those were the two major components. And arranging other stuff, just meetings and so on.

Q: How did he operate? One thinks of a union operator as barking orders and being confrontational.

BOCK: I think he saw his job pretty much in terms of carrying out the President's instructions on normalizing relations. I think that's why he took the job. He was happy to let the DCM do most of the work in running the mission. So, no, he was not going around barking orders at people. He had a narrower focus.

Q: Under Gates and under Woodcock, did you find that this new liaison office was a happy ship or a focused one?

BOCK: I think it was a pretty happy ship. It was a small office. Virtually everybody was there because they wanted to be there. Not all of the positions were Chinese language positions, but most of them were. These were people who had studied Chinese and, having studied Chinese, the chance to actually go into the Middle Kingdom was a great thing. For some support staff, that, of course, was not true. But I think with very few exceptions there were… It was a very isolated place. You couldn't travel. There were certain tourist things you could do in and around Beijing, but you eventually played those out. Very little entertainment. Some health problems. Terrible dust. But given all that, morale was pretty good. That changed to some extent after normalization, but I didn't see it. What happened after normalization was, becoming an embassy, you had a huge expansion in the number of people there. There was difficulty in accommodating them in housing and for certain periods of time in office space; we had to get additional office space. So, I became aware after I had left, talking to friends, that there were considerable

morale problems in the early '80s because of that. But it was pretty good when I was there.

Q: When you were there, did we have anything in Shanghai or Guangzhou?

BOCK: Absolutely nothing. The Chinese had an annual or semi-annual- (end of tape)

During the annual trade fair in Guangzhou, we would send people from the embassy from the economic section, commercial office, agricultural trade officer, down there. They'd set up shop for the duration, which was maybe a month or so. But we had no permanent representation anywhere else. We got to Shanghai on a regular basis, but it was always on visits.

Q: Were you feeling that we needed to take the temperature of what was happening and really needed somebody in Shanghai?

BOCK: I think there was a sense early on that we wanted to have people there. I don't know how this had been discussed, but I think it must have been looked at and decided, well, that's nothing we can deal with until after we have full diplomatic relations; we're just not going to be able to accomplish it. But once diplomatic relations were decided on, then one of the early things on the agenda was a consular agreement which would invoke consular protections but also the opening of consulates around the country.

Q: Which meant they did the same.

BOCK: They did the same thing. And we had an agreement for five consulates. We ultimately only opened four. The fifth one was never done for both budgetary reasons and I think we just decided it didn't make sense.

Q: What about relations with the Soviet Union?

BOCK: We had rather distant relations on the ground there with the Soviet embassy. It was kind of a cat and mouse game that the Soviets would play. I would say virtually everybody in the liaison office had some Soviet officer who would contact them. I know I did. You'd kind of play around, see what they knew. They'd try to find out, see what you knew. Sometimes it was useful from our point of view. You always had to be very careful. The guy I talked to was a China watcher. I'm sure he was KGB. At the senior level, I don't remember any contact. There might have been some that I've forgotten, but it wasn't much.

Q: Did Japan play any role? Were we making an effort to include the Japanese in our efforts?

BOCK: Yes and no. The Japanese may have had a larger embassy than we did. We had a lot of contact with them. Again, sharing of information. You were living in this island

there where you had extremely limited ability to talk meaningfully to the Chinese. So, the diplomatic community was kind of forced in upon itself. Of all the places I've ever served, you had much more feeling of community in the diplomatic community there because everybody was in the same isolation. We talked to the Japanese, the Germans, the French, the Egyptians, the Romanians… But the Japanese were high on the list. They, of course, were extremely interested to know what we were doing on normalization. We weren't in a position to tell them. I can remember feeling rather bad myself. I was aware of normalization talks going on, but I was as surprised as anyone else when we were informed one weekend that Ambassador woodcock wanted the entire staff to assemble in his dining room the next morning. On that morning, we were all there and he made the announcement. He said, "President Carter is going to announce later today a normalization agreement." So I, just like anyone else except Stape Roy and possibly the communicators, was not aware of the timing of that at all. The Japanese at that point were put out. They wanted advance notice and they didn't get it.

Q: It's always been a problem with the Japanese. The Japanese leak like mad.
BOCK: Well, we had the whole Taiwan situation to deal with. I wasn't dealing with it, but I sure heard a lot about it, calling Chiang Ching Kuo out of bed at 2:00 AM or whenever it was to inform him at the very last minute. With that story, Taiwan was going to be going ballistic and you certainly didn't want the Japanese blabbing things earlier.

Q: You were talking about the diplomatic community. So often, the French are the odd man out. Did you find that they had a different cast on things?

BOCK: Not really. We had pretty good contact with the French. I don't remember them having… They had had diplomatic relations with China before the rest of us.

Q: De Gaulle in the '60s-

BOCK: Very ostentatiously. Although the British actually had a consulate or something even earlier. They never let it go. But they didn't officially normalize until later. So, the French had that wealth of experience, having been there through the Cultural Revolution. But I didn't particularly sense either any resentment or anything else. The French probably were like the rest of the Europeans; they thought that U.S. normalization with China would probably make their life easier. I don't think they had a special take on that.

Q: What happened after…

BOCK: The announcement was in December and it stated that the embassies would be opened in April. So, we had a kind of a transition period. The reason for that was, you had the whole dismantling of this establishment in Taiwan to take place. I don't remember now what the specifics of the negotiations were, but I'm sure they had something about getting all the military off the island before we had formal diplomatic relations. So, with all that, there was a Deng Xiao-ping trip to the United States. Remember him in Texas with his 10 gallon hat? This took place early in '79. You had the

complication of the invasion of Vietnam, where there was some feeling that the Chinese had taken advantage of us, that they had been planning this all along and they got the normalization out of the way and now they had diplomatic cover for doing this, which didn't make some people happy. And then finally where you had the normalization itself, which was a big show. We had the formal opening of the embassy and Deng Xiao-ping came and several other people. We had security issues and press issues, all of that.

Q: Did Brzezinski come over?

BOCK: He was there during the course of the negotiations. I think it was summer of '78. I was only tangentially involved in that visit. We had a number of visitors coming in '78, a number of Cabinet visits as this thing gathered momentum. That kept a lot of us busy, of course, as expected.

Q: Did they seem to be productive or was this everybody getting used to each other?

BOCK: It was a little bit of both, a lot of, as is typical in our government, of these Cabinet agencies had things they wanted to do with China and they couldn't really do in the absence of normalization. So, this was all kind of laying the groundwork for agreements of one sort or another.

Q: You left there when?

BOCK: I left there in late April or early May of 1979.

Q: Did you feel a little put out or out of joint that you weren't going to be doing normal relations time or did you really see any great developments at that point?

BOCK: There were all sorts of things to look forward to, but on the other hand, I had had a pretty full time there starting with the end of the Cultural Revolution and up to normalization. It was as good a time as any to leave.

Q: How about your wife? Was she able to find work?

BOCK: She worked at some different jobs in the liaison office, but she had a difficult pregnancy which caused her to stop working. Then our child was born. That was late '77 and she was busy with that.

Q: I think this is a good point to stop. This is 1979. Where did you go?

BOCK: I'm bound for Berlin.

Q: You were off to another hotspot.

BOCK: About this time, I decided I was becoming a specialist in divided countries,

having served in Vietnam and studied in Taiwan and served in China and now I was going to Germany.

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Q: Today is August 13, 2002. Berlin. You were in Berlin from 1979 to when?

BOCK: To 1983.

Q: That's a good solid time.

BOCK: That was a long assignment and it was assigned that way from the outset, which was very unusual. It wasn't an extension.
Q: What was the situation in Germany, East-West, and then in Berlin when you got there in '79?

BOCK: There had been a Social Democratic government in power in West Germany since the mid-'70s. Moves toward détente were initiated by Willy Brandt with his Ostpolitik. There had been a series of agreements first with Russia and then with East Germany which kind of stabilized the whole situation there. At the time I was there, Helmut Schmidt was chancellor when I arrived, although it must have been the 1980 election where the Social Democrats lost. In Berlin, you had initially also a Social Democratic government which had been in power for a long, long time. The governing mayor was Dietrich Stobbe, who was a relatively young socialist. Although the situation was relatively stable, there were a lot of issues on the table which had to do with the desire on the part of the Germans both in Bonn and in West Berlin to deal on a whole list of practical matters with the East Germans and a great caution on the part of the United States and the other two Western "occupying" powers, Britain and France, to make sure that the whole construct surrounding Berlin rights was not weakened through any of these contacts or negotiations.

Q: When you arrived there, was there almost a Bible of what thou canst do and what thou canst not do regarding Berlin? How far tailgates can go down, all this?

BOCK: It wasn't all written down, but, yes, there was a considerable Berlin lore as to what you could and could not do. There was the whole business of going from Checkpoint Charlie and there were written procedures there to visit East Berlin. East Berlin was not East Germany and we'd bend over backwards in our official doings to make sure that the distinction was maintained. Under the Western theory, East Berlin was part of a unified city under Four Power occupation. As far as the East Germans and Soviets were concerned, it wasn't. It was the capital of East Germany. So, there was a certain amount of fiction that went on there.
Q: What was your job?

BOCK: The title was Senat liaison officer. The Senat was not a senate in terms of a

legislative body but rather was the Berlin city cabinet. So, my job was liaison with the Berlin city government. This was part of the overall Three Power occupation structure in that the city government was obligated to consult the Western allies on a whole range of issues, particularly anything that had to do with their dealings with East Germany or East Berlin. This meant that we had weekly meetings – the British, French, and American liaison officers – with a high ranking official of the Berlin city government where anything they were doing was supposed to be passed by us, an opportunity for us to raise concerns or give answers to questions raised previously. When an issue like this came up, then there was a whole structure of this occupation regime where a given issue would be taken up by one or another committee among the three allies.

Q: Who was the head of our mission when you got there?

BOCK: David Anderson was minister. Later on, it was Nelson Ledsky. Formally, the head of our mission was the commanding general, who was later General Boatner. I can't remember who it was when I first arrived. But on most issues, the minister was the person who was making the decisions or in some cases referring things to Bonn or Washington.

Q: How did Anderson run the outfit?

BOCK: Anderson was an extremely engaging person who motivated people without seeming to try. He made it clear right away that he expected you to do your job and trusted you doing it. He didn't want to interfere. But anytime we had questions, he was there and that was the way he operated.

Q: He was very close to Larry Eagleburger, too.

BOCK: He was close to Eagleburger, who at that time was in Belgrade.

Q: How did we feel when you got there? Were you told, "Watch this. They're getting wobbly being Social Democrats?" Were we concerned that the Social Democratic Ostpolitik thing had crept into the West Berlin government so we really had to kind of keep an eye on them?

BOCK: I don't think we looked at it in terms of a Social Democratic problem. To the extent that they wanted to work out ways of living with the East Germans, this was a widely held view among Germans. They were representative. There wasn't really partisan politics there. But, yes, we were made aware from the outset that there was somewhat or at least a potentially different point of view between the Western allies and the Germans in this question. In fact, there were differences among the three Western allies, too. The French were the most hard over on not letting the Germans do anything behind their backs. The British were perhaps the most accommodating and we were sort of in the middle. It wasn't true on every issue, but in general.

Q: How did we feel about the other side of the hill, other side of the wall, the Soviets and

the East Germans?

BOCK: The East Germans were clearly trying to establish in the international realm their sovereignty over East Berlin. This was the big issue. There was no question where they were coming from. With a few exceptions, the Soviets tended to support that, although it came at the expense of their occupation role so they wouldn't go all the way, but for the most part. So, there wasn't any question where the East Germans were coming from. We didn't have a lot of control over what they wanted to do. It was just how they were going to be dealt with.

Q: What sort of contact did we have with the East Germans and with the Soviets?

BOCK: We had no contact with the East Germans. That is, in West Berlin, we had no contact. We had an embassy in East Berlin which through some nomenclature device that I don't remember now was to East Germany but not in East Germany or something like this. That office dealt with East Germans on a bilateral basis. But they did not get involved in any Four Power issues. I don't remember that ever becoming an issue between the two missions. With the Soviets, there were some institutional arrangements including Four Power minister meetings, Four Power commandant meetings. We had on our staff a protocol officer, one of whose duties was liaison at the working level with the Soviet embassy in East Berlin. So, with the Soviets, we had considerable dealings. I did not personally.

Q: During this period, was it a relatively tranquil period? So often on the Berlin thing, one has the feeling there were probes and people trying various things.

BOCK: It was relatively tranquil. There were no major crises. There were some incidents involving our military people who had special arrangements for visiting East Germany. I wish I had a file with me that I could go back to and look at these issues. I remember things like a highjacked Polish airliner landing in West Berlin. Probably the major issue that I worked on during my last two years there was something that I don't think I'm capable now of describing adequately. It had to do with the S-Bahn, a largely above ground intracity rail transport system which belonged to the old Reichsbahn, an East German institution. There was also a subway called the U-Bahn, which was West Berlin run. It included a brief extension in East Berlin. That was quite separate. The S-Bahn ran in both parts, East Berlin, West Berlin. The employees were all, in effect, employees of the East German government even though many of them were West Berlin citizens. It was a very curious deal. I don't remember how this issue started. I have a feeling it had something to do with wage demands by the workers which they tried to get the West Berlin government involved in. Anyway, the West Berlin government came up with a scheme, in effect, to take control of part of the S-Bahn. We were going to have to negotiate this out. And it just raised so many issues that it had everybody just cracking their heads for years. But that was a typical Berlin issue. It's not something that made headlines anywhere. But we were always very afraid to do things that would establish a precedent that the East German government could use to diminish Western rights. That was always the bottom line.

Q: Were you and the rest of the mission watching carefully the population of West Berlin, concerned that somehow or anther it might gradually through its situation lose through migration almost?

BOCK: Yes, that was a potential issue, although it was offset by the fact that West Berlin was free of the West German draft and therefore attracted a large number of young men in particular. That had implications for the political cast of the West Berlin population as well. As liaison officer, one of my ancillary duties was to be the de facto internal political reporting officer. So, I followed all the elections. I had contacts with all the political parties. There was this undercurrent of leftist radicalism in West Berlin which was stronger for the most part than in West Germany proper.

There was another issue, too, which was not a direct issue for the U.S. There was a new political party called the Alternative List, which was kind of an offshoot of the West German Greens but was separate from it and which took a very radical bent. It basically opposed Western occupation rights. It also got into extralegal activities involving immigrant rights, Turks in particular. We went through a period deciding whether we should even have any official contact with this organization and finally decided we should. To put this in context, the early '80s, this was the period when there was a big debate all over Europe about the intermediate range ballistic missiles.

Q: This was in response to the SS-20s.

BOCK: The response to the SS-20s. The American response was to place IRBMs in West Germany. The left picked this up and said we were creating tensions and so on. The SPD government wavered on it, was then replaced by a Christian Democratic government which was less wavering but also not real enthusiastic for a while. This was being played out in Berlin, too, in demonstrations and other things.

Q: How did you view the demonstrations? Did you feel these were coming from within the population or were they fostered by the East Germans?

BOCK: I don't think there was any significant East German involvement in it. There were people involved in the demonstrations who were certainly susceptible to communist propaganda, but to go beyond that and say they were being manipulated, told what to do, by Soviets or East Germans, is quite unlikely.

Q: Did most West Berliners that you dealt with really see having the Four Power, essentially Three Power, force in West Berlin as keeping them from being dominated by…

BOCK: Yes, I think this was a general view. It was felt very strongly by the older generation who had been through the erection of the Wall. Even among the younger generation, they recognized the value of the Four Power status, but they really wanted to

be able to run their own place with a very minimum of interference. And they shared what tended to be a fairly general sentiment in West Germany as a whole which was a form of - passivism may be too strong a word, but accommodation. They knew war. Some of them didn't that were younger, but Germany knew war. They didn't want to have anything to do with it. Sure, some defensive measures were necessary, but the main solution to peace in Europe was to act peacefully. When this INF issue was being talked about, it was viewed in that context.
Q: Was there concern in talking to people in our mission about the possibility that West Germany might reach an accommodation with East Germany, essentially saying, "Okay, we will unite and we will take West Germany out of NATO and East Germany out of the Warsaw Pact and have a big neutralist hunk?"

BOCK: I don't think so. There were some fears in the '70s at the time of Brandt's Ostpolitik that this might lead in that direction. By the time I was there, first of all, nobody thought the Soviets realistically would allow a neutral East Germany. So, the question was whether West Germany through its interest in accommodation and easing the division between East and West not would withdraw from NATO but would take positions within NATO which made it more difficult for NATO to do what it was supposed to do.

Q: Did you have any contact with the Free University of Berlin and other schools there?

BOCK: I didn't have any regular contact with them. I had sporadic contact with a few people there. I don't know there was. There were large numbers of academic exchanges and that sort of thing going on between us and them. But in terms of… First of all, the Free University was nothing like a monolith. It tended to be a haven for some leftist people, but it was all sorts of things.

Q: So it wasn't considered one of these bastions of Marxist teaching?

BOCK: No. Well, some people may have considered it that, but in general, that would have been a gross exaggeration.

Q: Were you there during the bomb that went off in the nightclub?

BOCK: No. That was after I left.
Q: It turned out the Libyans did it.

BOCK: We had some issues with radical Arabs being arrested for one thing or another, but certainly not that big nightclub incident.

Q: Was there concern in our mission that East German spies were everywhere?

BOCK: I don't remember that being a big deal. There was some concern because there had been issues of East Berlin and East German espionage getting very close to the West

German government. Wasn't his name Gunther Guillaume?

Q: He really caused Brandt to resign.

BOCK: Yes, he was something like the chief of staff, a very high advisor. That was before we were there, of course. But that showed what they were capable of doing. That never seemed to be an issue with the West Berlin government per se. So, it was only something that was kind of a vague concern. I don't remember, for instance, any particular heightened concern about FSN employees in the mission.

Q: I imagine that the Berlin government and all was much closer to the problem, whereas Bavarian delegates wouldn't be as concerned in the central government. How about the hand of our embassy in Bonn? Did that weigh heavily?

BOCK: We worked fairly closely with them. There was the Bonn Group in which the embassy was represented at a Four Power committee which would take up so-called inter-German issues, East-West German issues which involved the West German government. So, there was always a little bit of a tricky dividing line as to what issue is something that is basically a Three Power occupation issue that we can deal with the West Berlin government on and what requires the involvement of the West German government. Those issues came up from time to time. There was not always a total meeting of the minds on this. But I don't recall that we ever considered that the embassy was being heavyhanded on it. If there was an issue, it was an issue that normally we considered to be with the West German government, not with the American embassy in Bonn. I do remember one thing and it wasn't very important – during the visit by President Reagan. I was sort of point-man for setting the thing up. One of the big issues there was the West German government, the president, that wanted to accompany him. This was a real touchy issue as to what the West German president could and could not do in West Berlin because that was a question of sovereignty and the sovereignty issue is one where we didn't quite see eye to eye. That issue had to be handled in Bonn. It couldn't be handled in Berlin. That is an example of the sort of things that would come up. I should mention just in passing that that was my heaviest involvement in my entire career with a presidential visit. What really came home to me was that within the White House the question was security versus public relations. Those of us in the field who were trying to get some bilateral political gains out of this were fighting an uphill battle. You had to on each individual issue decide whether you were going to ally yourself with the Secret Service or with the White House politicos. If you could do one or another and accomplish your objectives, that was fine. If not, you were totally out of the loop.

Q: How did the visit go?

BOCK: The visit went fine. When he was elected, he would not have been the popular choice of the Germans. He was seen in most of Europe as a cowboy. That had abated somewhat by the time he came, which I think was 1982. But he was still a target for protests. He made one speech at the Charlottenburg Palace, outside. I remember some

very detailed planning went into that as to who would be invited and where people would be positioned so as to make sure that it didn't turn out to be a really bad photo op with people screaming and holding signs. But I think the visit was a net plus. This was not his "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" visit. That was his second visit when I was no longer there. I think Andropov was still in power. But Reagan was starting from so low in the basement that any decent visit would have helped and I think this one did.

Q: How did you find the American military?

BOCK: We had issues. Another part of my job was to be the recipient of all the complaints of the Berlin city government about military activities. And there were many. The Berlin brigade considered it necessary to keep up their skills by doing a considerable amount of training. Of course, where they trained was in the city. It was very difficult to find places that they could do this without upsetting somebody. There were constant issues over this. Allegations of finding unexploded munitions in public places, of too much noise, this, that, or the other thing. For the Berlin brigade, there was somebody who was in our mission who was effectively their liaison to the civilian side of the U.S. mission. I think there were two people in that position during the course of my time there. They were both very cooperative looking for solutions to these things. It wasn't a situation where there was real civilian-military clash of views, but it was always a little tricky to find a solution which was going to dampen the civilian opposition while allowing the military to do what it needed to do.

Q: By the time that you were there, was the thought that there would be a war started there or was this pretty well ended? There used to be a time when always in the foreign affairs field, we looked at Berlin and said, "Here's the place where if somebody screws up, you could end up with war."

BOCK: I think a number of scholars feel that the building of the Wall probably removed a lot of that risk, at the expense of a lot of other things. I don't think that was a real concern. Again, this ballistic missile issue was being picked up by the opposition, saying this was going to lead to war. But that was not a Berlin-specific problem.

Q: Were you just reporting on the Senat or were you lobbying?

BOCK: Oh, yes, we would lobby on issues of importance to us, not only talk to the chief of chancery and his deputy but to various political leaders on issues of importance. A good deal of that fell to me.

Q: What was your impression of the political class in West Berlin?

BOCK: It's a little hard to generalize. It was a mix of political hacks and then some much more farseeing people. During at least the last half, if not more than half, of the time I was there, the governing mayor was Richard von Weizsaecker, who later went on to become president of West Germany. He was an extremely impressive figure who pretty

much did away with the image you sometimes got of the German conservatives of being a little too in thrall to their past. He had a very clear and realistic picture of what the Four Power rights were about and their importance. That didn't mean we didn't have issues. We did. But he was basically coming at the broad issues of East-West relationship from a position very close to where we were.

Q: I always think of a Berliner as being like a New Yorker, being pretty aggressive, tough talking, sharp edges. Did you find this?

BOCK: Oh, yes, but not to the extent that I think of it in New York terms. I would not make that stark a comparison, I think. Of course, you had even in the Berlin political class a lot of people who were not originally Berliners. You had an awful lot of former East Germans - or people who came from what became East Germany rather. So, I wouldn't overdo that characterization.

Q: How about the Wall and repercussions? Were you getting escapes and situations and that sort of thing?
BOCK: Occasionally, not very often. The wall had been up for 20 years. Most of the logical means of escape had been used and identified, so there wasn't too much happening. I'm trying to remember, there were some escapes. I can't remember the specifics of them now. One or two of them involved Steinstuecken, a tiny little exclave, a part of West Berlin which was almost totally surrounded by East Berlin with just a little street poking through. Yes, it was still going on. The typical Berliner tried- (End of tape)

Q: When people came from the U.S. to visit, was the Wall a place people would take them to?

BOCK: Yes. It was almost always on the itinerary. There were certain viewing points where one could climb up a tower and look at the extent of the wall.

Q: How about going into East Berlin? Was this something you were more or less obligated to do fairly often?

BOCK: No, but it's something I did do off and on partly for the cultural life. They had a very good opera over there, two of them actually, and we used to take those in when we could. Occasionally I had contact with the embassy staff over there. It was always the drill of going through Checkpoint Charlie and getting briefed and they wanting to know how long you were going to be, and making sure that you understood the rules and were not subject to East German police, which was a tricky issue. You were supposed to ignore them if they tried to stop you. We also made several trips to East Germany, which was something the military in West Berlin could not do. But as diplomats we were able to do that. We could get visas. We had to make sure we didn't use the visas in East Berlin, but we went out the other way and had a different license plate on our car, lots of games we had to play. It was interesting to get out and see how backward much of it was.
Q: This is the thing. People got so used to the Soviet Union and its economic status and

what it was producing that somehow East Germany seemed to look pretty fancy. And yet when the Wall came down, the West Germans took one look at this and thought, "Oh, my God." They almost had to rip everything apart and start all over again.

BOCK: Yes, it really was a house of cards. When I was there, East Germany's gross domestic product was something like the 15th or 20th largest in the world for a relatively small country. That was all based on this elaborate relationship and planned economy and had no real basis in reality.

Q: Yes. How did you feel, having served in China and Berlin? Did you feel yourself part of the German club or the China club?

BOCK: I was a bit ambivalent about that. I had kind of one foot in each. On the one hand, I rather of liked the ability to go back and forth, but on the other hand recognized that I risked being looked at askance by one or the other for not being true blue.

Q: So what happened to you in 1983?

BOCK: Well, I was due for a Washington assignment and accepted that. I was recommended for senior training. I went to the National War College.

Q: You were there from '83-'84.

BOCK: That's right.

Q: What was your impression of what you got out of that?

BOCK: I appreciated the opportunity to do a lot of reading and discussing and thinking about topics larger than a little chunk of the world. I also appreciated the opportunity to discuss things in depth with a wide range of military officers. There is a lot that's sort of casually talked about in terms of the military mind and most of it is wrong, but there are certain ways of looking at the world and at their job which the military inculcates. From the point of view of the Foreign Service, it was extremely useful to have a lot of exposure. I had had some exposure in Berlin and other places. But that was useful.

Q: So in '84, whither?

BOCK: In '84, I was assigned to H, the legislative liaison…

Q: How did you feel about that?

BOCK: I wasn't real enthusiastic about it because first of all, I wasn't sure that I was going to fit in real quickly into what one needed to do in lobbying Congress, which is essentially what it was all about. But on the other hand, it gave me an opportunity to deal with a wide variety of issues. I was the East Asia "legislative management officer" as the

term is. That was a plus.

Q: You did this from '84 to when?

BOCK: '86.

Q: Where were your key points of contact within the Senate and House for East Asia? I assume there were some people, committees, that…

BOCK: It tended to be the two committees, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In particular on the House side, the Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs, which was headed by Steve Solarz in those days. Appropriations were obviously important, but the way the H Bureau was organized, there were separate people who did the liaison with the appropriations committees. So, my contact with them tended to be very minimal. Once in a while.

Q: How did you find Solarz's committee or Solarz himself in dealing with East Asia? Were there issues or elements of concern?

BOCK: We didn't always see eye to eye. It was a Republican administration and Solarz is a Democrat. But the staff was very accessible. I had a very good relationship with all the staff on his subcommittee and when opportunity presented itself, with him personally. I felt that I had a much better feel for where they were coming from than I did in the case of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which was a much more amorphous type of operation. There I could deal with the committee staff, but you have all these senators who have their own staff person, one of whose responsibilities may be Asian issues. To keep track of all of them was more difficult.

Q: Solarz, of course, was almost a unique type of person, hardworking, hardcharging, made these long trips in which he did nothing but work.

BOCK: He played a little tennis.

Q: In many ways, he was bringing to his committee a much more personal vision because he had been there and talked to everybody.

BOCK: That's right. And he was recognized by other congressmen, not necessarily as having the truth on these issues but being very possessive about them. And so they tended to let Solarz take the lead on many issues involving East Asia.

Q: Were there any East Asian issues that you got particularly involved in?
BOCK: Well, yes. One of them was the whole question of the Marcos dictatorship in the Philippines. Near the end of my tour in H, I was on Senator Lugar's election-watching trip, where he eventually declared that the election had been fraudulent and that in turn led eventually to the uprising against Marcos. I was also in the Crisis Working Group

representing H when the uprising happened and tried to do the 24 hour liaison with Congress.

Q: Particularly in our relationship with the Marcos regime, Senator Lugar played a key role in that as one of the people who essentially told Marcos to go.

BOCK: That's right. And other one was Senator Laxalt, who had made… Lugar was first on the election watching thing and then I think Reagan sent Laxalt out as his personal representative after that, trying to persuade Marcos to give up, initially without success. But Congress, the Senate in particular, was very much interested in that.

Q: On the Marcos problem, things got worse and worse, particularly after the killing of Aquino. Did you have the feeling that the State Department had written Marcos off long before the Reagan administration? Was there a fight for the soul of Ronald Reagan?

BOCK: I think there was. Whether it's correct to say that the State Department as a whole had written it off or not, I'm not sure. But I do remember that Reagan personally was among the last to feel that this was an issue that had to be dealt with.

Q: He didn't give up on people he knew personally. It was very personal, I think.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: And he had the feeling that… It was almost a fight to get him on board.

BOCK: Yes. We had lots of other issues. There were MIA issues involving Vietnam. Congressman Montgomery was head of the Veteran's Committee and was very much on a different track from the Reagan administration in the question of whether there were still MIAs left.

Q: What were you getting from your colleagues? It seems to me that this MIA thing, which still hasn't really died yet, had become a cause of the far right. For those of us who looked at this thing, it didn't seem to make much sense that somehow or another the Vietnamese or communist Vietnamese were holding prisoners for some nefarious purpose.

BOCK: The right may have latched onto this, but the real problem was an organization of family members - I don't think they represented the majority of the family members of the MIAs - who had gotten a lot of political clout and had convinced themselves that there was a cover-up going on. And they had an ally whose name escapes me in the White House who essentially enforced a policy that we're not doing anything that this family group won't accept. It was in that context that the whole thing was being handled, although there were a lot of people in the Pentagon, in the State Department, who really believed that there weren't MIAs alive, nobody was willing to take on the family organization. That's where it sat.

Q: How were relations between the People's Republic of China and the U.S. during this time? Were there issues?

BOCK: There were always issues, but they were relatively calm. The Reagan administration early on had signed the so-called August 15th Communique under which he agreed to limit arms sales to Taiwan. There was a lot of kind of "angels dancing on pinheads" in the implementation of that. Politically, it stabilized the relationship so that in the '84-'86 period, there wasn't anything really serious on the plate there.
There were problems in Korea. Kim Dae Jung was in exile in the United States and went back during that period accompanied by several congressmen to make sure there wasn't another Ninoy Aquino on the tarmac of Seoul airport. So, the administration was trying to deal with that in a way that didn't totally upset the Korean government.

One of the issues I spent an enormous amount of time on was the compact of free association with the Pacific Isle states. At that point, they were all still UN trust territories but under a specific regime. They were not like the other UN trust territories. There was a general commitment on the part of the State Department certainly and the U.S. government as a whole to find some more permanent setup for them. There were a lot of issues involved. The Pentagon wanted to make sure that its rights, particularly for missile ranges, were preserved. There were issues involving nuclear cleanup in Bikini. There were also bureaucratic political issues. The Interior Department, which ran the trust territories, was somewhat reluctant to let go of them. The Interior committees in the Congress were extremely reluctant to end their oversight.

Q: It's a nice trip once a year.

BOCK: Absolutely. It's a big budget for them to look after, too. So, there had been negotiations proceeding on this for some time and they finally reached the culminating phase and then there was the effort to get various committees in Congress on board and after jurisdiction was assigned, to get the entire thing approved by the committees and there were lots and lots of committees. That was much less a foreign policy issue than a real bureaucratic bowl of spaghetti. It took up a lot of time.

Q: What were you doing? Did you find that for the most part your liaison work was going and explaining the issue and discussing it with the committee staff?

BOCK: It was that and trying to find out what was being planned on the Hill and, if necessary, getting that back to the appropriate people in the State Department to make sure they had a chance to react.

Q: Did you have people dealing with Congress who would give you a heads up if something was going to come down the pike that was going to be a problem?

BOCK: Oh, sure. I guess in all areas of Congress, there tends to be something of a

symbiotic relationship between the committees and their bureaucratic counterparts. That was true, not totally, but to some extent, between the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs committees on the one hand and the State Department on the other. A lot of the things that were cooked up by Congress would come from outside those committees and we'd have people in those committees saying, "Yes, this is coming up. Thought you might want to know about it and devise a strategy." Sure, there was a lot of that.

Q: How did you find that your work in H meshed with the East Asia Bureau?

BOCK: By and large, pretty well. One of the personal advantages for me was that I got to know more people in the Bureau than I ever would have holding a bureau job. I was literally in and out of every office in that bureau almost on a weekly basis and sometimes on a daily basis. I sat in on the staff meetings. I had regular contact with the Deputy Assistant Secretaries and the Assistant Secretaries. Now, there was always a potential issue - and I understand that under the current administration this is no longer an issue, but I'll believe it when I see it – H tends to be protective of its liaison responsibilities vis a vis Congress and doesn't like the bureaus to go off doing things on their own. I don't ever remember being "end-runned," so to speak, by the Bureau, but there were some things that they definitely wanted to do on their own rather than through H. Those were occasionally issues, but not usually. The other thing was to get definitive bureau views on touchy subjects. Could the State Department accept X? Sometimes I would come back with an answer of "No, we can't accept." I remember one occasion – I don't know if it happened more than once – a higher up got a different answer than I did and I was left in a very awkward position. So, it's a little bit of a tricky relationship. By and large, I found it worked quite well.

Q: Who was the head of H when you were there?

BOCK: When I arrived, it was Ambassador Tap Bennett, but not for long. He retired within the first half year. Then it was Will Ball, who had worked in Congress on the Republican side. There was some awkwardness to that because we were dealing with a Democratic Congress and here was a Republican former staffer who was now dealing with Democratic committee chairmen. But he was a very calm presence. He had left before I did. Maybe on an interim basis, Jim Dyer, who is now the staff director for the House Appropriations Committee, was head of H. The H front office was a mix of Foreign Service and former Hill people, either staffers or lobbyists. The mix usually worked, didn't always.

Q: With staff, often they're young people who have particular points of view which may have nothing to do with their masters in the House or the Senate but are able because their masters have got an awful lot of things on their plate to get… In the East Asian thing, did you find anybody riding a particular hobby horse?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: What were some of the issues?

BOCK: Now that you mention it in those terms, you asked earlier about China and I said China wasn't terribly on the front burner, but there were people in the Senate who were constantly trying to pick fights with China and trying to get resolutions on the floor or riders attached to appropriations or authorization bills or whatever, stating positions on issues involving China. The State Department position was "Let us take care of that." So, yes.

Q: You left there when?

BOCK: Summer of '86.

Q: So, the Reagan administration was still in.

BOCK: Was still going. I was assigned to Taipei. I was separated from the Foreign Service and signed on with American Institute in Taiwan to go out to Taipei in a position which was equivalent to political counselor but was called chief of the General Affairs Section [GAS].

Q: Did it take a while to learn the nomenclature of the American Institute?

BOCK: A little while, but I was already somewhat familiar with it given other Taiwan issues that would come up during my H stint.

Q: This transfer out of the Foreign Service, was that nervous making or were things so well in place…

BOCK: This had been going for seven years by then, so it was pretty straightforward. One annoying aspect of it was that your name showed up in the State Department news magazine as having left the Foreign Service with no other description of what was going on. Later, I tried to resolve that problem and made some progress. By and large, it was pretty straightforward. There were some issues with payroll. Not only were you on paper leaving the State Department, you were actually leaving the State Department payroll and being picked up by AIT and that did not always work smoothly.
Q: You went out when?

BOCK: 1986.

Q: And you were there until when?

BOCK: 1989.

Q: What was the situation on Taiwan when you went out there in '86?

BOCK: Actually, it was an extremely interesting time to be there. The government of Taiwan was run by Chiang Ching Kuo, the son of Chiang Kai-shek. He was getting very old by that time. He had made the decision, encouraged by the United States, to gradually democratize the political life on Taiwan. He was just starting to implement this in 1986. Up until that time, there was a legislature which was totally dominated by holdovers from the Mainland, people who had fled from Mainland China in 1949 and had been there ever since. They were getting pretty old. Of course, his hand was being forced. Something had to change. There were elections on Taiwan but only for a minority of the seats in the parliament and no opposition party had been allowed to form. There was an active opposition, many of whom had been jailed following an earlier series of demonstrations early on, some of them were just getting out of jail at that point. So, there were these moves. He was starting to open up the political system. He also set in train a rethinking of relationship with the Mainland. Up until that time, all contact by residents of Taiwan with the Mainland was banned. But China, of course, had gone on its new economic path in the early '80s and was inviting overseas investment and there were a lot of Taiwanese businessmen who were quite interested in doing so and were doing it despite this ban, setting up front companies in Hong Kong or elsewhere. Again, to some extent, his hand was being forced. He was going to have to regularize this somehow. This was a major issue because the government of the Republic of China considered itself to be the government of all China and had ever since 1949. So, how to square that with any sort of contact with the Mainland was a real problem.

All this was happening, and the Taiwan opposition was to some extent… First of all, they were almost all Taiwanese, very few people who had any real ties to the Mainland, the difference being the Taiwanese are Chinese that came over three or four centuries ago as opposed to the ones who came over 30-40 years ago. Some of them were strong advocates of formal independence for Taiwan. So, from the U.S. government point of view, we were caught in not exactly a dilemma but kind of a tricky issue. On the one hand, we were clearly in favor of democratizing Taiwan. On the other hand, we were not in favor of anything that would look provocative to China, like declaring independence, because then that would call into question what our obligations toward Taiwan were. So, in dealing with this emerging opposition, we had to walk that very fine line, and in dealing with the government, too, but particularly with the opposition because they had people back here who were lobbying Congress and carrying on public relations activities. They were sometimes hearing what they wanted to hear from their contacts in the United States that, "Yes, independence would be a great thing. You guys deserve it." We had to make clear that that was not the U.S. government policy, us coming to their aid if they did anything too drastic. So, that was very interesting. That was the biggest part of my job.

Q: Let's talk about the opposition. If you're doing what we always profess to want and what we do want, growing democracy and all this, if nothing else, let's say they didn't declare independence but they were going to be sitting there as a bright little island working away with good economics and good democracy and all and then you look over at this huge monster over there which essentially doesn't have that… The more we promoted democracy, the more we were promoting trouble for ourselves.

BOCK: Well, you have to remember, this was before 1989 and before the Tiananmen incident. The general sense both here and in Taiwan was that China was opening up economically and politically. People were able to talk about things they couldn't have talked about before. They were even in some cases able to write about things they weren't able to write about before. The trends were favorable. Therefore, a demonstration on Taiwan of how democracy could work in a Chinese society could perhaps help that process along in China and that if it ever did, then the choices facing Taiwan would be somewhat different. On the one hand, they might be able to deal with a democratic China and say, "You guys don't really want us. Let's be sensible." Or a democratic China might be attractive enough to the people on Taiwan that they'd say, "Okay, yes, let's work out a deal here and we'll be part of you under certain conditions." All of those roads seemed at least possible in 1986 and '87. It wasn't until after '89 that people had to look at it in a different way.

Q: What was your impression of the Kuomintang types on Taiwan and then the new breed coming up on the Taiwanese side?

BOCK: First of all, the nationalists were a very mixed bag. The top rung were still the Mainland establishment. But in the party structure, because the party was there to run elections as a major part of their job, they had to appeal to the Taiwanese electorate. They had a lot of native Taiwanese in their party structure who were to some extent at odds with the leadership in the legislature, these old Mainland holdovers. So, the Kuomintang was undergoing this transition to become a party to appeal to the population of Taiwan. It wasn't easy but it was still very much a top-down structure so that when Chiang Ching Kuo indicated "This is where we're going," even the old guys at least halfheartedly signed on. On the opposition side, you had these people who were operating as an opposition on Taiwan who actually ran an election that first fall I was there, although they could not run on any party affiliation. They were called the Dang Wai, which literally means "Outside the Party." There was one party [the KMT] and they were outside it. They were the ones by and large who had been the lawyers for the people who had been imprisoned. They had been trying to work within the system to get their people released. However, over time, more and more of the more radical elements who had been either in jail or in exile in the U.S., in some cases Japan, were getting back into the country. So, the people who were running this incipient opposition in 1986 gradually started to lose control toward the more radical, more pro-independence types. So, there was a real shifting of ground there on both sides of the equation.

Q: How did it work? You were an independent organization. The desk is in Rosslyn and is not part of the State Department. Who was running the show? Who was getting the orders?

BOCK: From our point of view, that was never a problem. We looked at it as a useful fiction. Our policy instructions came directly from what would have been the Taiwan desk, called the Taiwan Coordination Staff in the East Asia Bureau. We communicated

directly with them all the time. Administratively, it was different. But on the policy side, that was clear. The managing director of AIT in Rosslyn would come out for visits, but he was also taking guidance from the State Department on anything he said. So, it all worked quite well. There were occasionally egos involved between the managing director in Rosslyn and the director in Taipei. But on the policy side, we didn't have a problem.

Q: Who was your director in Taipei?

BOCK: I went through two. Harry Thayer was there for the first year. Then after him it was David Dean. I had worked for David Dean in Peking years earlier, so I knew him quite well.

Q: With the KMT there, were they comfortable with us or was the relationship beginning to fray because they were seeing they were beginning to be outmoded and we were part of the problem?

BOCK: There was a little bit of that. To the extent they were uncomfortable with us, it tended to be on China policy rather than on domestic policy, particularly because Chiang Ching Kuo had said this is what he was going to do, he was going to open up. We said, "Hey, great. We're with you." Sure, there were issues. I can remember at one point our [CIA] station chief came to me and said, "The security people are upset because you and your section are meeting with all these opposition people." It was his job to pass on that message. He was the liaison with the security people. But we talked about it in a staff meeting and it was absolutely clear and he was told to go back and talk to them and tell them what our policy was. So, there were elements in the government which were not happy about this, but we felt that we were doing things that were quite compatible with what the President wanted.

I should mention that Chiang Ching Kuo died in office, I think in '86. This led to a great deal of uncertainty as to what was going to happen next because it was such a top-down structure. We were scrambling to find out. We didn't have a lot of influence on the internal situation, but we were scrambling to find out what was going to happen. Eventually, he was replaced by his vice president, a Taiwanese, had been brought into that position specifically as part of this policy of opening up the KMT to the Taiwanese. He was always going to be succeeding as president because that's what the constitution said. The real question was whether he was going to succeed Chiang as head of the party. There was quite an internal struggle over that. It lasted several weeks.

There was another issue which paralleled this. Years earlier, there had been indications that Taiwan had been pursuing a nuclear weapons development policy. Somehow we had gotten a hold of that and we shut it down. I don't know any of the details on it. We then put in place a cooperative mechanism of nuclear exchanges that allowed us to keep track of what they were doing. Despite that, I think in the fall of '86 or early '87, somebody who was working in their nuclear field defected to us and told us they were doing it again. The defection became public just after the new president took office. We had to again try

to ensure that the program was being shut down. The question was, was the new president in a position to do that? He had barely made it into office. He was not one of the old boy network. We didn't think he had control of the military. All sorts of questions. It was a military program. So, we had a very dicey few weeks there which I was not directly involved in in terms of talking to people because the people who needed to be talked to weren't my contacts. But eventually it worked out fine. It was not only a question of how is democracy going to go, but this other issue as well.

Q: Were there issues concerning the Taiwanese government's agents in the Chinese community in the United States? Sometimes they seemed to have a heavy hand.

BOCK: The big issue had been an earlier one when there was an assassination of a critic of Chiang Ching Kuo. That was well before I was there. There were still some repercussions from that. I don't remember any specific issues coming up during that '86-'89 period. We were well aware that part of the job of the Taiwan representatives over here was to mobilize Chinese Americans in favor of their policy. That's fair game. Everybody tries to do that. During the course of those three years, there was competing policies. The Taiwanese opposition was doing the same thing. They didn't have any official representatives, but they had lots of unofficial ones. No, I don't remember that being a big issue for us.

Q: What about arms sales? (end of tape)

BOCK: On arms sales, I mentioned earlier that there had been this negotiated communiqué with China on Taiwan arms sales in 1982. That said that under the assumption that China continued to pursue a policy of peaceful settlement with Taiwan, we would limit our arms sales to Taiwan and gradually decrease them. There were some more specifics involved which we interpreted and gave the interpretation to the Chinese that we would not exceed the level of arms sales as of whatever the base year was. Then there were all sorts of machinations that were a little bit like Enron accounting. You try to make sure that the numbers conform with this. I think by the late '80s most people felt that this was a ticking time bomb. Taiwan's weaponry was getting more and more outmoded. There was also a qualitative restriction on arms sales which was seen as worse than the quantitative one because the longer we said we weren't going to upgrade in quality Taiwan's weapons, that meant eventually they were going to start falling behind. But nobody wanted to tackle that until they had to. When this all came to a head was during the Bush reelection campaign of '92 when he decided to throw a bone to General Dynamics [and approve the sale of F-16s to Taiwan]. For reasons that were really domestic politics rather than foreign policy, he decided to approve this very massive arms sale, which clearly busted that '82 agreement even though he tried to claim it didn't. But in the '86-'89 period, we hadn't reached that point yet. The program was okay.

Q: Did you have the feeling that on China policy you had maybe a series of groups but one group which was very influential, those that were on the initial opening to China with Kissinger and really looked on Taiwan as being just a plain nuisance – let's get on

with the big game – and these people dominated things for a while? Was there a feeling that there was this group and you were having to deal with this?

BOCK: The group had been there, but we were in the Reagan administration, so they weren't quite so dominating. Reagan in his campaign had talked about normalizing relations with Taiwan and was finally talked out of that. Sure, there was tension over the policy, but the big tension had been in the early couple of years of the Reagan administration. After that, everybody had kind of come to terms with the general outlines of the policy and you just had these little things that would come up from time to time. But I would say there was no big struggle over China policy within the administration during my three years in Taipei.

Q: Did you have a feeling that the people in AIT were being monitored very closely by Mainland Chinese agents and if you got what they conceded to be out of line, there would be screams of bloody murder and all this?

BOCK: Well, monitoring in the sense of following any news about what we were doing, sure. We didn't feel that there were agents in the streets.

Q: I would think that on any sensitive issue like that, they would be looking at what you all were doing to see if you were getting beyond…

BOCK: That was only one part of the equation. We had to be very careful for a whole bunch of reasons. You would go and talk to some leading opposition figure. You had to be very worried about what was going to appear in the opposition press the next day. They were quite capable of distorting what you may or may not have said. On the one hand, sure, Mainland watchers would pick that up, but so would our own government and so would people in Taiwan on both sides of the independence issue. So, we had to not only watch what we said but also be careful if something came out which was a distortion to make sure it was corrected quite promptly.

Q: Did you see a problem or lack of problem in recruiting Foreign Service China types for Taiwan? Was all the action seen as being over on the Mainland or was there a fairly easy flow back and forth?

BOCK: We didn't have a big problem, no. There was a good flow. It was a relatively small structure as opposed to the embassy in Beijing. Some people found that attractive. You could do your political-economic work there.

Q: Much better living, too, I suppose.

BOCK: Yes, particularly in the '80s when housing was extremely shorthanded in Beijing and in Taipei we were nicely set up. Since service in Taipei was by no means a bar or even a disadvantage to later service in Beijing… If it had been-

Q: It's like we had in Israel at one point where if you had served in Israel you couldn't serve in the Arab world.

BOCK: There was nothing like that. There were concerns at the outset with AIT as to… For a time, nobody was assigned directly from one to the other. That broke down. A deputy director in Taipei went directly from there to be consul general in Shanghai. I think he was the first to do that kind of direct transfer. So, the Chinese knew what we were doing. As long as we didn't throw it in their face and declare these people to be diplomatic officers [while in Taipei], they basically didn't care.

Q: Were you seeing developments within Taiwan of a growing strength of the economic community? Were you seeing this turning into one of the tigers?

BOCK: Yes. This was very much economic miracle time. The Taiwan economy was growing extremely fast. They were starting to get into the semiconductor business but most of the growth was still in consumer electronics. They had the U.S. market for toys sewed up. Shoes. All this kind of stuff. Then toward the end of the '80s, a lot of that lower wage type stuff starting moving to China. By the time I left, there was beginning to be concern as to whether the Taiwan economy would be "hollowed out." I think that is still a concern now, but in fact, they were able to handle it very nicely through the 1990s, so for the longest time, they kept doing very well by pushing overseas across the Straits their low wage stuff and retaining the higher value-added things in Taiwan.

Q: How about exchanges? Did we have a good student exchange? We had a big one with Mainland China.

BOCK: There was a student exchange, but it was very much one sided. There were a certain number of American students who were interested in going to Taiwan, particularly people interested in Chinese culture who found better access in Taiwan than in China. Huge numbers of Taiwan students going to the United States. This was self-financed. Some of them even went as high school students in order to avoid the draft. They violated our immigration regulations in doing so and that became an issue at one point. I think around that time, mid-'80s, Taiwan students in the United States may have been the largest group of foreign students. This is from a relatively small place.

Q: Were they coming back?

BOCK: They were starting to come back. Earlier there had been this great brain drain concern. But the economy had reached a point by the late '80s where a number of these people, many of whom had gotten their American citizenship, were now coming back, many of them as entrepreneurs, but also the government was recruiting a number of people with technical expertise to come back and run departments. I do remember sometime about 1988 when under some political pressure the government decided it was going to require all government employees or just all above a certain rank to give up any foreign citizenship they had, which meant U.S. citizenship. That's what they were talking

about. That was quite an issue for some of these guys because they really didn't want to give up that American passport.

Q: On the academic side, I would imagine that Taiwan would almost fall below the radar of academic interest with a few exceptions in the United States. All of a sudden, Mainland China was opening up and all the goodies were over there.

BOCK: For Sinologists, people interested in Chinese culture, Taiwan was still attractive. For some people in political science, there was some interest in Taiwan, both because of this relationship with China but also as a very prime example of an authoritarian country which was democratizing. Thirdly, people with academic economic interests also were interested in Taiwan because of its example as an Asian tiger. But that's not to say that that wasn't overshadowed by the very great interest in China, which had been closed off for so long and suddenly in the 1980s was available.

Q: Visits. Could people from Congress come?

BOCK: Oh, yes.

Q: Was there any problem there?

BOCK: Congress does what it likes. Congressmen visited all the time, sometimes very briefly, sometimes longer. Solarz came out at the time of an election. That was a lot of fun. People in the KMT government were very distressed. We spent a lot of time calming nerves. The only issue with Congress was their desire sometimes to come out on U.S. government planes. We had more or less of a prohibition of that. Sometimes there were some exceptions where they were dropped off and the plane flew off, but it was very tricky. We had a rule that no U.S. military would come to Taiwan. That was part of having gotten rid of the defense agreement. Of course, the government planes the Congress fly on are military planes. So, that was an issue with Congress. Otherwise not, by and large. With the administration, it was a very different sort of thing. Higher level representatives of the U.S. government were not supposed to come to Taiwan. However, given very serious economic interests of ours in Taiwan, there was a very good case to be made for Cabinet level people on the economic side to come out. That was normally done under the auspices of two counterpart private sector economic committees, one in Taipei and one in Washington. Each year, they would have a joint meeting alternating between the U.S. and Taiwan. So, when it was in Taiwan, we would normally send somebody of Cabinet rank out there. We always elicited a Chinese protest. So, there was sometimes a little reluctance in Washington to do this. It normally took place, though, and the Cabinet member involved was heavily briefed and heavily monitored to make sure he didn't say anything stupid because these people had nothing to do with Taiwan policy and were not really well equipped to dance the fine line that we normally did.

Q: In your dealing with the Taiwanese, how was the bureaucracy, the people you would meet at the foreign ministry and other places? Did you find them competent,

understanding?

BOCK: Most of them were very well educated, particularly at the foreign ministry. Competent, yes. Sometimes a lot more zealous than we would wish them to be. But they understood where we were coming from, so you could normally talk sensibly to them. We had issues involving their travel to the United States, for instance, which was a counterpart issue of our people traveling to Taiwan, where we did not see eye to eye. But we managed to deal with them. And they ultimately understood the power relationship.

Q: When did you leave?

BOCK: Summer of '89.

Q: This is important. When in the summer of '89?

BOCK: After June 4th. The whole series of demonstrations in the spring of '89 in Tiananmen were very closely followed in Taiwan. I remember the night of June 3rd, there was a huge gathering in downtown Taipei down by the main monuments there with a big wide screen showing [televised] scenes from Beijing. I was not there but I was watching the same feed on television at home. There was intense interest in Taiwan as to what was going on out there because it was important for them. Was democracy going to work in China or not? Also, some of the more prominent people on Tiananmen Square were popular music performers from Taiwan.

Q: As you were sitting with your colleagues in the interests section, what were you figuring was going on in China?

BOCK: It became clear that there was a serious difference of agreement within the Chinese government. If there hadn't been that, the whole series of demonstrations would have been ended with very little chance of the loss of life that happened. There had been efforts at controlled democratization getting back to '86/'87. Hu Yaobang was purged because of them. The question of how these demonstrations in '89 were fitting into all that was looked upon in different ways by different people. We didn't have any great insights as to what was going on. We would read whatever was available, the cable traffic, from our embassy. But certainly by the beginning of June, it looked like it was getting out of hand. Everybody was fearful that something bad would result.

Q: You left there. Where did you go?

BOCK: I went to Australia as consul general in Melbourne.

Q: So, as a reward for your sins, you were sent there.

BOCK: Something like that.

Q: Sent to an undivided country.

BOCK: That's right. Yes.

Q: We'll pick this up in 1989 when you're in Melbourne.

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Today is August 21, 2002. You went to Melbourne. You were there from when to when?

BOCK: From 1989 to 1992.

Q: How had Melbourne been treated by the system? Had the political process snuck in there?

BOCK: No, not that I'm aware of. We had had political ambassadors off and on in Canberra, but not in the principal officer positions, even in Sydney as far as I know.

Q: Who was the ambassador while you were there?

BOCK: He went out just about the same time I did. It was Mel Sembler, who was a political appointee, had been one of President Bush's campaign officials and was also active in the Nancy Reagan anti-drug campaign.

Q: Before you went out to Australia, when you talked to the desk and others, were there any simmering problems dealing with Melbourne that you felt you had to concentrate on?

BOCK: I suppose the major Melbourne-specific problem revolved around [naval] ship visits. There was a somewhat left-wing government in Melbourne which had an anti-nuclear position and had raised difficulties for various sorts of ship visits in the state. Of course, ship visits were basically a federal issue in Australia, but there was this local component to it.

Q: Can you talk a little about how you saw Melbourne, where it fit in the Australian composition?

BOCK: Melbourne was sort of the less flashy counterpart to Sydney. It's not quite as large a city. It used to be the seat of government. It was and still is the major manufacturing city in Australia. It was a magnet for very large scale immigration in the '60s and '70s and continuing on and was a very strong labor union center. This meant that the Labor party was heavily tied in with the labor unions and was certainly influenced by them. In national politics, it was kind of a mixed bag. Victoria was the second largest state, so a lot of people from the state of Victoria were active in national politics. But it didn't have the clout that the Sydney area had.

Q: I assume that because of manufacturing, it was more of a blue collar city.

BOCK: It was a mix. It was heavily blue collar but also a lot of old money. Sydney is kind of brash, sort of the Los Angeles of Australia. Melbourne might be the Boston. I wouldn't carry that too far… So that you had this kind of old line pro-British upper crust combined with this blue collar mostly non-British, considerably Irish, but also a lot of continental European and increasingly Asian blue collar workforce.

Q: What was your principal work there?

BOCK: The principal work outside of managing the consulate was really representational. It was getting out and around and trying to explain U.S. policies, trying to build support for them. This was right at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. It included the period of the Gulf War. The role of the United States was changing and attitudes all over the world were undergoing reappraisal as to what the role of the U.S. should be and what the role of their own country vis a vis the U.S. should be. So, I took on a lot of speaking engagements as well as more private conversations to try to deal with what it was we were trying to do.

Q: Obviously, things were changing all over. Our prime concern had been the Soviet Union and all of a sudden, whammo, the Soviet Union had gone. Then you had the invasion of Kuwait and our response to it. Being in a place like Melbourne, did you find that you got good guidance or did you kind of do it on your own?

BOCK: There was a good deal of information available through the wireless file and other sources from Washington that I could draw on, but, yes, I put together things pretty much on my own based on whatever I could get out of Washington.

Q: What were groups you talked to particularly interested in?

BOCK: I think they were interested in… This was a time when this "new world order" was being bandied around. Bush used the term once or twice and that sort of became a grand plan that, in fact, nobody had. But it was dealing with that kind of question - where are we going now in the world? I should mention that there were more parochial things that would come up. We were pushing for what's now termed "globalization" - I'm not sure that term was being used then – in the economic sphere. Well, the Australians had all sorts of quibbles about our agricultural policy, for instance. There were a lot of other economic issues that cropped up as well. But in the overview, it was, now that the Cold War is over, where does the Australian-U.S. alliance fit in to the big picture?

Q: What did the Australian-American alliance mean?

BOCK: Well, it's an interesting question. It wasn't an easy one to answer because the original Australian-American alliance was anti-Japanese. Then it became anti-communist and depending on the point of view either anti-Soviet or anti-Chinese. By this time, very

few Australians wanted an anti-Chinese alliance and we weren't pushing that either. But then looming over the Australian horizon was Indonesia with some people seeing it as an opportunity and some seeing it as a threat. In population terms, it just totally overwhelms Australia. So, one of the perspectives you could bring up was that our role in the Pacific was a way of integrating these various countries in a way which would be of mutual benefit. That included what was at the time our increasingly closer relations with ASEAN, including Indonesia. That drew a positive response from a lot of Australians.

Q: When you were getting out there and talking, did you push the ASEAN side of things? In other words, it's not just us, but we're all in this together?

BOCK: To some extent. I wouldn't say I pushed ASEAN per se, but yes, the idea that these relationships in East Asia were cooperative and were working was the sort of thing you did.

Q: I always think of the Battle of the Coral Sea, which in American terms is not a skirmish but is not major. Was this something that was passed out?

BOCK: There was a deliberate effort to perpetuate it. There was an annual Coral Sea celebration in which the U.S. sent a presidential envoy and we would plan various events around that. It certainly is true that the old veterans and their contemporaries were the ones that really felt this. But it was a useful vehicle for having various events which would celebrate Australian-American ties. A lot of younger people got involved in this, too.

Q: You mentioned agricultural policy. What was the perspective there about our agricultural policy versus the Australian one?

BOCK: Their perspective was that we were subsidizing our exports, period, particularly wheat. Beef was also an issue. Our perspective was that we were in competition with a heavily subsidizing European Union and that we were using only targeted subsidies to recipient countries where Australia was not a competitor. I didn't get too deeply involved in this because I didn't have the expertise. We had an agricultural counselor up in Canberra. But I was not convinced. There were times during those three years when Australian agriculture was in trouble. They rely on exports and to the extent that we were underpricing our exports, it was a real problem.

Q: Did you find that the European immigrant population there was getting involved in European politics? Particularly I think of Yugoslavia. When I was consul in Belgrade back in the '60s, a hell of a lot of Yugoslavs were either going to the United States or to Australia. How did that play out?

BOCK: That was certainly the case. The two largest continental European immigrant groups in Melbourne were Italians and Greeks. With the occasional exception of a Greek-Turkish thing, there wasn't that much home politics that they would reflect there. But

there were substantial populations of Yugoslavs which in the period after ’89 we suddenly began to identify as Serbs and Croats and Albanians. Yes, they got quite active and we had a whole series of demonstrations at the consulate, not against anything we were doing, but they had grievances on what was happening back home and they wanted the United States to do something about that. It started off with Albanians. Then with the breakup of Yugoslavia, it became more general.

Q: What did you do?

BOCK: Well, if they had a petition they wanted to hand in, we’d take their petition and we made sure with the police that things were orderly. We had one or two demonstrations which threatened to get out of hand. I couldn’t tell you now which groups they were, but over the three year period, it wasn’t a serious problem.

Q: I interviewed Tex Harris. Was he in Sydney or Melbourne?

BOCK: He was in Melbourne some years after I was.

Q: He was saying that they got pretty nasty then because that was when we were actively intervening. Particularly the Serbs would go there with slingshots with big ball bearings.

BOCK: Yes. We didn’t have that.

Q: We hadn’t gotten that involved.

BOCK: Yes, that’s true. We were still before that.

Q: What was your impression of how Australia was integrating its people? I always think there is the melting pot theory in the United States and Canada has the stew theory, separate chunks but they all mix.

BOCK: I would say there were two issues, much as there are in Canada. One was the immigrant population. There were political differences with the more conservative parties holding on to a kind of British oriented Australia and the Labor Party being much more engaged in integrating and not just integrating but recognizing the heritage of these other groups. It never took on a particularly acute form while I was there. It was a sort of underlying debate that was going on. Then, of course, there was the aborigine population, which in numbers is quite small, but in terms of individual problems, it’s much, much greater than a question of integrating Greeks or even Vietnamese. The Australians were wrestling with this problem throughout. They still are. Land rights are involved. Native culture is involved. And they’ve made a lot of strides over the past several decades toward dealing with the problem, but they certainly haven’t solved it. Their aborigine problem struck me as combining the worst elements of our white-black race relations and Native American problem.

Q: In your position as consul general, did you find you were going after two groups, the old money and then the Labor type group? How did you spread yourself around and how did you find these groups?

BOCK: You dealt with what groups you could find. There were business groups of various sorts. For instance, both the kind of Rotary Club small business people and the equivalent of the Business Roundtable. I tried to keep good contact with both. I had various conversations with labor leaders, but the labor people were difficult to deal with. I could deal with the Labor Party. But not the unions by and large. Some of the unions were approachable and some were basically not. There were some real left-wingers there who had this - part of their ideological makeup was that the American government was bad.

Q: I'm told that in Australia you had some people who came over from the old British labor system, the type of guys who would gather together once a year and sing the Red Flag Forever.

BOCK: Yes. I think it was very much the same strain.

Q: Combining both a close communist tinge plus the left-wing intellectual despises the United States.

BOCK: Yes. The head of the labor movement in Melbourne when I arrived was a guy named John Halfpenny. He had the reputation of being able to pretty much manipulate the Victoria state government and I was able to talk to him on a few occasions but he really wasn't interested in talking to Americans and had this view that our policy was all wrong, if not evil.
Q: How did the Gulf War play?

BOCK: We were the subject of some demonstrations, not violent, by people who were basically anti-war. It wasn't that they thought Saddam Hussein was a good guy. The general population was quite supportive. We took on very tight security precautions at that time. This was decided at the embassy in Canberra. I had personal protection for about four months as well as heightened protection on the consulate. That was largely based on the fact that there was a significant Arab population in Australian made up of all sorts of people and there was a fear that there could be some terrorists among them.

Q: There were reports going out that Saddam Hussein had sent agents abroad.

BOCK: Yes, and I think Australia was included in it, but I don't think there was ever any solid evidence of that.

Q: But I remember those stories and Australia and the Philippines were particularly noted for that.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: What was your impression of the absorption of and the Asiatic influence? It was really quite new.

BOCK: It was mostly new. There was an old line Chinese population in Melbourne that had come over in the gold rush, but the vast majority of Asians in Melbourne tended to be Chinese and Vietnamese, although you had a sprinkling of Indonesians as well. Clearly, integration was much slower there, but it was happening. I should describe the setup there. Melbourne is a city of three million but the mayor of Melbourne only has control over the downtown business district and then you've got all these separate suburbs that have their own town councils. We were starting to see Vietnamese being elected to these small town councils. So, they were gradually finding their way into the political system, but it was slow.

Q: Were we making any effort to show what we were doing regarding this in the U.S.? Or did we find ourselves just observers?

BOCK: I wouldn't say there was any kind of a push to do this. The subject would come up. I and others would take the opportunity to say, "This here is what we've been able to do." But having served earlier in Germany, there really was a difference. Australia was a self-defined country of immigration. So, they recognized they had an obligation to do something about this. It was just a question of what was going to work as opposed to Germany, which at the time I was there was still in denial and saying, "We're not a country of immigration. We're a country of Germans."

Q: Australia being so far away, did you get many Americans coming over who got in trouble?

BOCK: Oh, yes. There is quite a tourist industry, including Americans. And we had rare bird smugglers and you name it.

Q: What did your consular district include?

BOCK: The Melbourne consular district was and I think still is about half of Australia. It included not only the state of Victoria but the state of South Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory. So, it had the entire central swath and then the southeast corner.

Q: What about Tasmania? Was this kind of fun to visit?

BOCK: Yes. I tried to get to both Tasmania and South Australia quarterly if possible. In Tasmania, it was often the occasion- (end of tape)

The Tasmania government was very welcoming of U.S. Navy visits. Plus, they could handle much larger ships, the aircraft carriers would come to Tasmania, which even if the political situation allowed could not get into Melbourne.

Q: I would think that an aircraft carrier with 3,000 men or something like that in Tasmania…

BOCK: They would love to have come into a bigger city. Hobart is a city of a little over 100,000. So, you'd get down there for that. Tasmania politics were interesting as well. They had a Green Party which was much further along in popular acceptance than it was anywhere else. But the ultimate significance of Tasmania was pretty low.

Q: We've had this thing for the last few decades with New Zealand about nuclear ships. I don't know where it stands today, but it certainly brought relations there to practically a halt. Was there any residue of this?

BOCK: There was in Victoria state, yes, but not with the federal government, which was perfectly supportive of nuclear powered ship visits. The nuclear weapons issue was a little more difficult for them. It seems to me there was some change in our declaratory policy, but I'm not sure now when it was. At any rate, we basically had the support of the federal government in Canberra for ship visits, nuclear powered, and nobody was going to raise a question of whether there were any nuclear arms there. But getting the government of Victoria to support that was a problem and until they would support it, the federal government wouldn't force a visit and neither would we. We actually got some ship visits during the latter part of my tenure there. But that was after a couple of different state premiers had come and gone. It wasn't easy.
Q: Was this again because of the leftist labor side?

BOCK: Yes. And there was a very strong anti-nuclear feeling in Australia which had almost but not quite stopped their shipments of raw uranium but which had actually prevented them from doing any uranium processing. So, they were shipping only the ore.

Q: Did you get involved with our listening stations up in the north?

BOCK: No. We had some consular issues occasionally involving them, but our consular people handled that. I did not get involved at all in anything else.

Q: Was there much of a flow of Australians to the United States other than as tourists?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: Let's talk about flow either as tourists or as immigrants.

BOCK: We had a practical problem in that after the institution of the visa waiver program for European countries and various others, we wanted Australia to be on board as well, but it required reciprocity and the Australians wouldn't, for reasons of their own, grant reciprocity, visa free entry to Americans. So, at the time, the Melbourne consulate was the third largest visa issuing post in the world. We had over 100,000 visas a year. It was a

terrible burden and we had some real public relations problems because there was just a massive flow and we had two officers.

Q: What did you do? I assume they'd come in bushel baskets.

BOCK: Yes, a lot of it was done through travel agencies, the same sort of thing which is now being criticized in Saudi Arabia but which worked quite well in Australia. But even so, managing that flow was quite a problem. As far as immigrants or workers, there was some of that but it was a tourist problem mostly.

Q: I would think there would be for bright Australians, particularly in the newer fields of electronics, of computers, and so on, they would tend towards the States as a place where they could show what they could do.

BOCK: Yes. Certainly a number of them did. I mean, you had a good number of students going in there and a number presumably staying, as students tend to do. I don't remember anybody complaining about a brain drain. I don't think it was considered a problem.

Q: I assume there were some universities in your area.

BOCK: There were three major universities in Melbourne and then there were also some in the other states. I can't say that I had all that much to do with them on a regular basis. We had a public affairs officer at the time and he took as one of his major tasks cultivating the university crowd and I left that to him by and large.

Q: How did the writ of the embassy run?

BOCK: It don't think there were any major issues. We were kept on a fairly short leash administratively, but that didn't bother me too much. We had quarterly meetings in Canberra with all the principal officers. People from the embassy were always coming down for one reason or another. The ambassador loved to come to Melbourne. He always regarded Melbourne as his favorite city, so we were getting lots and lots of ambassadorial visits. It was all pretty cooperative. I don't remember any major issues.

Q: You left there in '92. Whither?
BOCK: I was ready to go back to Washington with a teenage son. I was offered a place on the faculty of ICAF [Industrial College of the Armed Forces]. It's the sister institution of the National War College also located at Fort McNair in Washington.

Q: You did that from when to when?

BOCK: It was a year's assignment from '92-'93. I thought very seriously about staying on and doing some more but ultimately decided against it.

Q: What were you doing?

BOCK: I was assigned to the political science department. The way ICAF worked was that in the first semester, they had a core curriculum which took up most of the students' time. The core curriculum was divided into a bunch of segments, one of which was the political science segment, which really was an in-depth look at American political institutions and policy formulation but also with a foreign policy component to it. What we did was, the eight or nine of us people on the faculty of the political science department all taught the same course in our sections. So, we would get together as a group, work out the curriculum, which was based on last year's curriculum, so you sort of tinkered with it. Then we'd all then do the separate teaching. That was the first semester. The second semester was much more technically oriented where my expertise didn't fit in very well. However, I did lead an area studies course on China and I also helped out with some organization of a computer related course.

Q: What was the composition of the student body?

BOCK: Mostly military, with a sprinkling of civilians. There are certain stereotypes, but I found them not to be very accurate. You had a mix. You had some people who were very strongly intellectually curious, some less so perhaps. There was a feeling on the part of some of them that their careers had been a little bit parochial and that this was really the opportunity to learn to the big stuff. That was useful.

Q: Was there a view towards the War College and the ICAF? Did they characterize each other?

BOCK: Yes. There was a tradition that the eventual senior leaders of the services would be War College graduates, so the ICAF people had a certain second class status.

Q: How did you find the State Department fit into this whole thing?

BOCK: The State Department per se didn't fit in particularly. We had one other State Department person on the political science faculty who had been there for several years. Of course, the State Department had a role in the overall running of the National Defense University, furnishing the deputy president, vice president, whatever. But in the course as we were teaching it, you had a mix of faculty members. You had some people who were military officers. You had two of us from the State Department. You had a couple people who were from other agencies, one of whom was a detail from CIA, one of whom was a former CIA officer. So, you had a number of people who had experience in foreign affairs. Then you had career faculty, people who had taught at universities and then had come to ICAF. So, it was a mix. Some people had a more theoretical foundation, some of them more practical. What we brought to the mix was our practical experience with seeing and being involved in foreign policy formulation and implementation.

Q: While you were there with the military, you had the election of William Clinton. How did that sit?

BOCK: In the campaign, there was that whole business about his draft status. Yes, I think there was a considerable amount of disdain among the military in general - not universally, but in general - toward Clinton's background. I'm trying to think whether after his election there was anything that happened… Yes, Somalia. I think that was while I was still there. That was seen by some people as another example of a person who didn't have a clue what to do with the military.

Q: Did you see after Somalia, which we pulled out of rather quickly, that "We're not going to get involved with anything like this again?"

BOCK: Even before Somalia, there was this so-called Powell Doctrine in the air, which was the result of the Gulf War. It was arguably a result of Vietnam. The idea that you use force only when it's really important and you do so massively and only after gaining strong public backing. That clearly militated against the little operation in a far off place like Somalia.

Q: '93, whither?

BOCK: I stayed in Washington and was assigned as deputy managing director of the American Institute in Taiwan, which despite the "In" in its name was headquartered in the U.S. in Rosslyn.

Q: You were there from '93 to when?

BOCK: To '96.

Q: The organization had become rather mature by this point.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: How did you see its operation by that time?
BOCK: The office in Rosslyn was quite a small office. We had a total staff of about ten. It served a couple of functions. One, it served as an administrative backstop for the AIT office in Taipei. That was kind of a can of worms, that I didn't get involved in any more than I had to, although I did to some extent. Then we were also sort of an interface for Taiwan representatives in Washington, either stationed in Washington or traveling to Washington. This gets back to the nature of the U.S.-Taiwan relationship as it evolved after normalization with China in '79. We had no "government to government" relations. All relations were to be filtered through these private organizations which were set up, AIT on the American side and a counterpart organization on the Taiwan side. Well, the Taiwan government folks were never happy with this arrangement. They agreed to live with it but they were always tinkering at the edges. We had a relationship with Taiwan which covered a very large number of aspects. It wasn't just a political relationship. Virtually every agency of the U.S. government had something, some program or some

interest in Taiwan. All of these then had to be filtered through this artificial channel. That was what I spent most of my time on, dealing with all the agencies of the U.S. government to make sure that they understood how they were to deal with Taiwan and to offer our services in helping them to do so. Some of these agencies had longstanding programs with Taiwan and somebody assigned to run them who knew the drill and they were easy. Some did not and they were difficult.

Q: Before we get to that, who was the head of this? This was a time of some difficulty, wasn't it?

BOCK: It became a time of some difficulty. When I joined AIT in '93, the office was headed by Nat Belocchi, a former Foreign Service officer who had served in Taiwan and had been in that position for a couple of years. The tradition had been to fill that position with someone… With one exception, they were State Department background. Even the one exception had been someone who had been dealing with East Asia on a policy level. That had worked pretty well.
Q: Who was that?

BOCK: The exception was David Laux, who had been in the CIA and then been in the White House and been assigned to AIT. However, in '95, the White House decided that it had a new person they wanted to assign into that position who had virtually no China background and whose brief experience in the State Department as a political appointee had apparently been an unhappy one, a fellow named James Wood. There was a lot of resistance within the State Department to his appointment and it was delayed for a long time. It was finally, however, made. AIT has a formal structure - even though it's this artificial creation, it had a formal structure of a board of directors of three individuals, one of whom was the managing director and the other two were just separate directors. They formally elected a chairman of the board. When Wood was named by the State Department at the White House's insistence, the other two directors resigned in protest, publically. Belocchi as the third director was prevailed upon by the State Department to stay on so there wouldn't be a zero board with only this one new person coming in. He was not happy about it, but he was a good soldier and did that. But then there was a struggle to find new directors and there were a lot of things that developed in the wake of that. Wood had an agenda which was not transparent. He wasn't there just to implement U.S. Taiwan policy.

Q: First, where was his power coming from? Somebody doesn't just get nominated. You have to have backing and somebody who's pushing.

BOCK: Yes. I can only answer that question on the basis of rumor. His roots were in Arkansas. He was a lawyer from Arkansas and had been in Washington for a long time. Some people claimed he was a friend of Clinton's. He never really made that claim himself and I'm not convinced that he had any more than a passing acquaintance with Clinton. His nomination was apparently pushed by Dick Moose, who was Under Secretary for Management.

Q: He was also from Arkansas.

BOCK: Yes. Why it happened, I never understood. It seemed that this was going to be a troublesome appointment and why anybody would want to do that is beyond me.

Q: How did Congress fall in on this?

BOCK: There were some voices raised in Congress as to whether this was a good idea, but I don't remember… It's not a position that requires confirmation. There wasn't any storm involved. There were some questions raised.

Q: Where had Wood served in the State Department?

BOCK: I think he served twice. He had served once in Bonn in some kind of a legal office and I know very little about that. Then he had been out and been reappointed and served in the Office of Foreign Missions in Washington as their in-house counsel. When the whole controversy about his impending appointment to AIT came up, the former head of OFM was quoted in the press as saying he would never hire James Wood for anything again but not saying why. So there was bad blood there.

Q: So what happened? You were his deputy.

BOCK: Yes.

Q: This must have been very nervous-making for you.

BOCK: Well, it was awkward. But we managed to get on all right. He started analyzing what AIT's legal position was, had a lawyer background, with the evident intent of trying to make AIT more independent from the State Department. It was never clear where this was going to lead. I left before that developed into any serious problem. Then what happened is that he was accused of using some of his trips to Taiwan to get illegal campaign contributions to the Democratic Party. I don't know for a fact whether that was ever true or not. I think it's still unproved. But he was finally forced to resign and that was after I left. The reason for the resignation was on that basis.

Q: While you were there, did this job normally require policy considerations or was this really to operate sort of as the Taiwan desk?

BOCK: First of all, there was a Taiwan desk in the State Department. It wasn't called that. It was called the Taiwan Coordination Staff. The head of the Taiwan Coordination Staff was essentially office director. He was the one who did all of the policy recommendations to the East Asia Bureau. AIT was supposed to take all its policy guidance from the State Department. The only time that becomes an issue is when the managing director is making some public statement. On his various visits to Taiwan, he would normally have public statements and sometimes in Washington, although not…

It's usually the Taiwan press that's interested in what he has to say. Wood never got himself in real trouble on that basis. Whatever he was trying to do, he wasn't trying from the outset to change U.S. policy toward Taiwan. But he did have this kind of resistance to too much oversight from the State Department.

Q: I interviewed Nat Belocchi while he was still in the job. Was there concern in AIT in your office about there being an awful lot of money in the Chinese community, particularly those that are interested in Taiwan, and various connections? Was this something you knew was out there?

BOCK: Oh, yes. This had been a well known fact for years that Taiwan was considered next to Israel to be the best managed, best funded foreign lobbying operation in Washington. In fact, at one point, somebody dealing with China who was fending off all these complaints about how the U.S. was always catering to Taiwan's interests, said to this Chinese representative, "You ought to look at the way Taiwan operates. You might learn something." It was a complicated system because, first of all, they are a semi-official representation in Washington. Then there were various consulting contracts with some of the top notch lobbying firms in Washington, some of which were run through the Washington representation of Taiwan and some of which were not. And then finally there was the whole Taiwan independence movement operation, which was quite separate but which was also increasingly well funded from various Taiwanese-American groups and was in close with a number of congressmen.

Q: You had been dealing with Chinese affairs and had covered both sides of the Straits. Were you noticing a growing problem after Tiananmen that China per se, Mainland China, was pursuing this quite authoritarian stance, still run by a communist regime, and was pretty hardline with economic changes? And then you have Taiwan, which is increasingly, particularly on your watch, was treating democratic and much more what we all hoped other countries would be. When you get this, it gets harder and harder to not have an American response of saying, "Dammit, this is a democratic society and this other one ain't."

BOCK: Yes. It was becoming much more confrontational than it had been in my previous tour in Taipei. On the one hand, there had been the clampdown after Tiananmen so that moves toward democratization of China seemed to be pretty much on hold, although there were little things that a person could point to if you were looking. Secondly, the Taiwan government under Lee Teng Hui, who had taken over in the late '80s, was becoming increasingly, although it was a nationalist KMT government, Lee Teng Hui himself took a line increasingly looking toward independence, although he was usually careful not to use that term. He was very aggressive in trying to raise Taiwan's international profile. In fact, it was during my watch there that we had a major incident where he gave a speech at Cornell University which really outraged the Chinese government. It may be worthwhile to give you a little background.

Q: Yes. This is major.

BOCK: We had had a policy as of ’79 that visits to the United States by a president of Taiwan were out of bounds. We had Cabinet level visits which were all “unofficial,” even including the foreign minister, although the foreign minister could never come to Washington, but he would make stopovers. Taiwan had relatively few countries around the world that recognized it officially. One concentration of those countries was, still is, in Central America and to some extent the Caribbean. So, as they tried to increase their international profile, they wanted to send their president to various places like San Salvador and Panama City, but the only way to get there was to go through the United States. So, that raised the question of stopovers. And this was an awkward one from the U.S. point of view. The Chinese, of course, said, “This is totally outrageous for any so-called ‘Taiwan president’ to come to the United States under any guise.” Well, that wasn’t the U.S. policy. The U.S. policy was a refueling stop would be okay. But we were very cautious about somebody like Lee Teng Hui in particular using a refueling stop to engage in political activities.

So, this question came up in ’94 or ’95 of a stopover in Hawaii on the way to some event in Central America. What was proposed was an overnight stopover because of how long a flight it is, after all, from Taipei to Central America. The proposal that went up through channels in the State Department had several options involved on the basis of how long a stopover could be and where it could be and so on. For reasons that I had never understood, at a fairly senior level, another option was added which was “refuse.” That was the option which was adopted by the Secretary of State. It was communicated to Taiwan and greeted with outrage. “This has nothing to do with U.S.-Taiwan relations. You are preventing us actively from dealing with our diplomatic partners.” Well, it was an untenable position and the U.S. had to back down.

Q: Did you all get involved?

BOCK: Not really in the policymaking process, no. AIT’s role was, once the policy was set, then it was up to AIT to manage the actual stopover. So, eventually, the State Department backed down and said, “Okay, but only a refueling stop. No overnight.” Nat Belocchi was sent out to Honolulu to handle this. The story is that when Lee Teng Hui got to Hickam Air Force Base, he refused to get off the plane as a sign of his great displeasure with the way this had been handled. The plane was refueled and was sent on. That was not the plan. The plan was, there was a VIP room set up and he was to get out there and have an hour or an hour and a half stopover. He refused to get off the plane. The Taiwan people leaked the story that the U.S. refused to let him off the plane. It was only after a while that that was sorted out. This raised a lot of anger in Congress among friends of Taiwan.

That was the background, then, for the next thing, which was a request by Lee Teng Hui to accept an invitation by his old alma mater, Cornell University, to receive an honorary degree. The State Department’s position was that this would be a big breach of our policy. Stopovers were one thing, but an actual visit, even though it wasn’t the president coming to Washington, was going to be seen as a real change in our policy and also was

going to be real troublesome because it would allow all sorts of demonstrations and meetings and so on. But the result was that Congress passed some kind of a non-binding resolution virtually unanimously saying that the State Department should grant a visa to Lee Teng Hui to go to his alma mater. So, eventually the State Department backed down. It's my view that if we hadn't had this Honolulu incident in the first place, which had created this whole atmosphere, the original State Department policy on Cornell could have been maintained. But maybe not. You never know. Anyway, Lee Teng Hui came to Cornell. We worked with the university authorities there to try to see that this would not be politicized, but of course he had a huge entourage of press, he had various congressmen waiting for him on a change of planes in Syracuse for private meetings, and when he got to Cornell, he gave a very political speech. Of course, the Department had been giving assurances to the Chinese that this would not be a political speech. So, it was a disaster all around.

Q: Was anybody that you know of saying, "Let's not give these assurances. This guy is a loose cannon?"

BOCK: Not that I know of. I was one step removed from the people making the recommendations as to how we should handle it, but as far as who was talking to the Chinese embassy, that was still another step away.

Q: Did anybody from AIT go along?

BOCK: Oh, yes. Belocchi went up, as well as a couple of other people. I went up on an advance. When they sent their advance team over, I was up for a couple of days trying to work the arrangements and make sure that whatever restraint we could get would be put on the program.

Q: What was your impression of the advance team?

BOCK: I don't know exactly what they knew, but you started out with the assumption that anybody representing the Taiwan government would play for what they could get. There were no surprises there.

Q: Were people in AIT braced for the disaster?

BOCK: Yes.

Q: So what was the fallout?
BOCK: The fallout was not in the U.S. It was a ratcheting up of confrontation across the Taiwan Strait resulting in exercises in which the Chinese fired missiles off the Taiwan coast, in which then the U.S. sent two carrier battle groups down to the Taiwan area, saying, "This is unacceptable," and things were kind of wound down after that. But there has been more of a state of confrontation between China and Taiwan since that Cornell speech than there had been previously.

Q: Was there any disquiet on the part of the people who were in AIT about the aging military potential of Taiwan to defend itself? Was there a feeling that time was not with Taiwan?

BOCK: Yes, I think that feeling's been there all along. I had mentioned earlier when talking about my period in Taipei that in the 1982 Communique between the U.S. and China, in which we agreed not to quantitatively or qualitatively increase our military assistance, that the qualitative part was a ticking time bomb… With the decision on the F16s in 1992, that removed the qualitative restriction, although we claimed it didn't. But even so, yes, there were concerns. There was a fellow in the AIT office in Rosslyn whose job was the military portfolio. He was a liaison with the Defense Department and handled all these visits by Taiwan generals coming over. With the decision on the F16s, the next problem was whether Taiwan was really in a position to absorb these properly. That was a constant concern. There were other concerns. Taiwan wanted submarines. That was a big issue. We said, "No, because it looks too much like an offensive weapon." That decision recently has been reversed. But you're right. Regardless of what decision was made on these individual issues, there was still the reality that you had an island of 20 million people facing a continental power of 1.2 or 1.3 billion with growing economic power.

Q: Did you feel by this time- (end of tape)

Did you see a change in our relations with Mainland China? Had we gotten over the Tiananmen shock of '89? Were you seeing steps towards an improvement or was there always a qualification?

BOCK: Well, I think Tiananmen certainly continued to dampen any expectation of internal democratization in China, expectations that were fairly widely held in the 1980s. But what became the issue was no longer what was going to happen internally in China, although that was always an issue. But the major issue after this missile confrontation was, has China made a new determination that it's going to seek a military solution to its problems with Taiwan? After 1979, there was a general expectation, although Beijing was always a little bit cagey, that they were prepared to be patient and would look for ways to unify Taiwan into China by peaceful means. After 1995, that was increasingly in question and still is.

Q: Did you find that the approaching absorption of Hong Kong in '97 or '98 was looked at by everybody as saying let's see how this works and this might be something for Taiwan to look at?

BOCK: There was something to that, yes. People were interested in Hong Kong and the idea that the Chinese were going to want to handle Hong Kong smoothly because they need it as an example of how peaceful integration can work. On the other hand, there was realization that the circumstances in Hong Kong and Taiwan were very different. One was a colonial outpost which had never been run democratically although in the last years

Governor Patton tried to establish democracy. On the other hand was Taiwan, which was running itself increasingly as a democracy. It had been running itself for 40-50 years and had been democratic now for maybe 10 years. So, the issues involved were very, very different.

Q: By '96, what happened?
BOCK: I retired. I actually went back on the State Department roles for a couple of months so that I could retire properly.

Q: How did you feel about whither Wood? Was this getting to be something that you were glad to be out of?

BOCK: I was glad to be rid of it. I had no solution to it. I was his deputy. I couldn't do anything about it. I had great sympathy for my successor.

Q: To have somebody like this beginning to act in a different way, as a deputy, did you begin to look over your shoulder, asking legal counsel to make sure you weren't ending up being tied to somebody who was going down?

BOCK: No, I didn't have any personal concerns there. The State Department legal people were getting tied up in knots. But that had nothing to do with the other personnel at AIT Washington. It proved what should have been obvious to everybody all along, that if you were going to set up an artificial construct for foreign policy reasons to implement certain aspects of foreign policy, you had better make sure that everybody understands that it's artificial and have somebody at the top of it be committed to that. That was just lost sight of at that period.

Q: It was interesting how despite all the objections, he was forced on the system.

BOCK: Well, he was the White House candidate. What that meant is awfully hard to know. It doesn't mean Bill Clinton just stood there and said, "Get him in there." The White House is an office.

Q: You retired in '96. What have you been doing since?

BOCK: After a bit of time enjoying some leisure, I went back to the State Department on a part-time basis in 1997 and spent four years working on the Korea desk helping to implement the Agreed Framework with North Korea.

Q: Let's talk about that.

BOCK: Okay. The Framework was this thing set up in '94 as the result of discovery by the International Atomic Energy Agency that North Korea had given faulty assurances to the Agency about its nuclear material. When that came out, North Korea said it was going to withdraw from the IAEA and withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Since

everybody knew that there had been some kind of a nuclear program, they had a nuclear reactor which had been functioning and were building two much larger ones, power reactors, there had been (and I wasn't part of this at all) a big debate within the administration what to do about it. This is almost casus belli. But the decision was to try to see what one could do in negotiations. Negotiations did take place over a period of a year or more, resulting in this so-called Agreed Framework under which the North Koreans agreed to shut down the nuclear reactor and eventually allow full inspections of its nuclear program, allowing some inspections at the beginning and then eventually full inspections by the IAEA, in return for the U.S. compensating it for its alleged loss of power from the shutting down of both the existing reactor and the ones being built. That compensation was to take the form of two light-water reactors which use a different technology with less easy to divert spent fuel, and interim delivery of heavy fuel oil until these new reactors came on line. What the U.S. did, and it wasn't sequential, but the result was forming an international organization largely with Japan and South Korea to fund this program with support later on from the European Union.

Q: So what role did you have?

BOCK: I was involved mostly with the heavy fuel oil supply. That was largely funded by the U.S. Every year, the State Department would go over its non-proliferation account and would ask for a certain amount to be sent to KEDO [Korean Peninsula Economic Development Organization], the international organization in New York, to cover this. Congress was never enthusiastic about this program and particularly after 1994, the Republican Congress saw it as a Democratic program for cooperating with North Korea. Congress, however, had no better solution to what to do about North Korea's nuclear program. So, instead, they simply put on all sorts of hoops that the administration would have to jump through in order to get the money. It was my role to deal with the hoops, various assurances on all sorts of issues involving North Korea. We had to send up reports, have presidential certifications on various things... We had a series of GAO investigations. So, all of these had to be coordinated and that was my role.

Q: Did you get to North Korea?

BOCK: Once. It wasn't really part of my normal task, but at one point when there was kind of a gap in the office staffing and there was a KEDO negotiation with the North Koreans which included the heavy fuel oil program, I went over.

Q: What was your impression?

BOCK: I wasn't surprised. It was a very closed place. You couldn't get around to see very much. I didn't even get into Pyongyang. As it turned out, we flew into Pyongyang airport and then were driven up to a mountain resort, if that's the word, a hotel, toward the north of the country. It was very regimented. It was clearly poor but you couldn't get out and see the poverty very well, so impressions were limited.

Q: Did you get involved in negotiations with the North Koreans?

BOCK: Only regarding the heavy fuel oil.
Q: How did you find working with them? Was there a problem with diversion of heavy fuel oil?

BOCK: There was an apparent problem of diversion which was very difficult to deal with. They would say, "No, we're not diverting." Since our only evidence was intelligence based, there was a little bit of a standoff there. There had been a history of these problems coming up and history showed that they would tend to back off some of the more blatant things that they were doing when challenged, but you could never really solve the problem. At least that was my experience.

Q: Did we seem to know much about North Korea or was our intelligence limited?

BOCK: Well, it was certainly limited. We had various technical intelligence. The few Americans on the ground included a couple of people assigned to the building project, the nuclear reactors. We had several people on an off and on basis who were at the site of the old nuclear reactor where there was a continuing process of cleaning up the spent fuel. There were military teams that went in during this entire period on MIA searches. But these were all very limited and for the most part people who had no intelligence background or ties as far as I know. The people we sent to the nuclear spent fuel operation were contractors for the Department of Energy. They had nothing to do with intel.

There was, of course, the food crisis going on the entire time. There were lots more international agencies getting into North Korea than had previously been the case. So, there was gradually a little better understanding of the economic situation, for instance, than there would have been in 1990. But in terms of how the government operates...

Q: Did you get involved with the Japanese government? They would have concerns.

BOCK: We were involved with them trilaterally. Now, I not very directly, but the whole KEDO operation was... Japanese and South Koreans together with the U.S., and increasingly the Europeans, ran that organization. So, there was constant coordination going on, some of it in Washington, some of it high level meetings out in capitals one place or another, but not much that I was involved in directly.

Q: Are you still doing this?

BOCK: No, I thought four years was enough of that, so I left last year.

Q: Well, this has been fascinating. I thank you very much.

BOCK: Well, it's been fun for me, too. I've enjoyed it.

Q: Great.

End of interview