

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

**AMBASSADOR GERALD B. HELMAN**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*  
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## INTERVIEW

*Q: Do you go by Jerry?*

HELMAN: Jerry, yes.

*Q: It's inevitable. (laughs)*

HELMAN: It's inevitable.

*Q: Let's start at the beginning. Could you tell me where and when you were born and a little about your family?*

HELMAN: I was born in Detroit, Michigan on November 4, 1932. My father was a carpenter and later a building contractor; my mother was a housewife. My family migrated from Belarus before and just slightly after the First World War. Of course, it wasn't called Belarus at that time. It was part of Russia.

*Q: That's around Minsk.*

HELMAN: Well, yes, it was around Minsk; it was in the Pripyet area, downwind from Chernobyl, I'm afraid. *(laughs)*

My education was in...

*Q: Before we get to your education, let's talk about your parents. Your mother and father - how far did they get in schooling?*

HELMAN: In formal education in the U.S. (United States) sense, probably not much beyond high school, if that, although I think it's hard to draw equivalents. My mother came to the United States when I think she was probably twelve years-old. My father probably was about eighteen or twenty-years old.

*Q: They both came from more or less the same area?*

HELMAN: The same area, but met, as fate would have it, in the Detroit area after they migrated.

*Q: Looking at migration of things, were you from a Russian family, a Jewish family or...*

HELMAN: A Jewish family.

*Q: So many who came out of Russia and Poland in those days headed for basically New York or something. What got them all the way into Detroit?*

HELMAN: Oh, I think probably, as with others similarly situated, the first member of the extended family who came to the United States ended up for one reason or another in Detroit. I don't know what that reason might've been - found a job there and so other members of those families tended to follow and congregate, or else the other members of the community, for one reason or another, came to that area and others tended to follow because that's where those who were familiar resided. Probably nothing terribly more subtle than that.

*Q: Well, this is the real pattern.*

HELMAN: It's a real pattern.

*Q: Do you have brothers or sisters?*

HELMAN: I have two brothers and a sister.

*Q: Where do you rank in there?*

HELMAN: Oh, I'm number two after my sister, and then have two younger brothers.

*Q: When you came out was it an orthodox family or was it...*

HELMAN: Almost by definition, yes. Very much so. The family came from an orthodox environment in Russia although I think it probably was under Polish control when my mother was born but I'm not sure, and perhaps under Russian control when she

emigrated. My parents were born in David Horodok which was what is known as a “shtetl” - a Jewish village - and the family practices and the like, and the education, were orthodox.

*Q: Did you find yourself in a shtetl community in Detroit or had the sort of insidious process of Americanization been going on?*

HELMAN: It's inevitable that it always goes on. It's an interesting question, but it's true. I found myself in a shtetl-type community; something I realized obviously only after I grew up. I spoke only Yiddish until I was four-or five-years-old. When I went to kindergarten I discovered that I was the only one speaking Yiddish and I had to learn English. So you learn English and you go on from there.

I wouldn't have considered speaking to my parents or my grandparents in anything other than Yiddish. That was the family language.

*Q: Were there tales of the Old Country in the family?*

HELMAN: Not really many. My parents never dwelt on the Old Country. It was not a very happy time what with persecution, war, revolution and poverty. It was not an experience they wanted to recall.

Not particularly from my mother, but occasionally from my father, we would learn something about his life in the Old Country, but more from his siblings, particularly from one of my aunts. My father came from a rather large family, my mother from a smaller one. But when I grew up we had aunts, uncles and the like that formed an extended family with the cousins and so forth. In later years, particularly because my wife was really quite curious about it, we found out a bit more from one aunt in particular who had good recall and was willing to talk about it. But much of the time, to the extent that my parents or their siblings would be interested in characterizing life in the Old Country, the characterization was one of some misery and they really didn't want to talk about it. They made a decision to leave and of course they left.

My father occasionally recalled his life because he was after all a boy at the time of the onset of the First World War. His father, my grandfather, was a carpenter and even though my father was born in 1900, was thirteen, fourteen-years-old when the war began, he was an apprentice carpenter and when he was fourteen-, fifteen-years-old, together with my grandfather and one or more of my father's siblings, would undertake construction work under contract to the Russian Army building barracks and so on. And as you know that the area of Pripyet had extensive large forests and lumber industries. So this was an experience that he occasionally recalled.

He also recalled experiences with the Cossack groups - the Chmelnyiky - and the others would come to the village and cause havoc. And he also recalled during the Russian revolution when he saw Trotsky who came through and made speeches intending to rally

the population to the Bolshevik cause. My father did recall that Trotsky was quite an orator, capable of handling several different languages; and, of course, in the area in which my father lived, Trotsky would speak in Yiddish and my father attests that he was very impressive.

My father also recalled that one marauding Bolshevik gang threatened to kill him as the son of a Kulak and not a worker. When my father protested that he was a worker, the gang leader asked to see his hands. Seeing they were calloused from carpentry, my father was spared. It's almost like a story out of Isaac Babel.

My father migrated not initially to the United States. He migrated instead to Argentina. And from Argentina - I think in about 1922-3, he got a visa and came to the United States. He worked as a carpenter in Argentina. He never dwelt on his experiences there but did learn and remember a fair amount of Spanish. I have an address book and brief diary that he kept and one of my retirement projects is to translate it.

He did recall towards the close of the First World War when his father was away on some sort of contract work, the family and the village itself was starving because they couldn't harvest their crops, and couldn't trade, with the chaos of the revolution. My father was charged by the family to take a sack of beet sugar, a very valuable commodity, and go to Moscow and try to sell it, I suppose on the black market. He recalls hopping the freight right behind the coal-burning engine and riding to Moscow only to find that the sugar had been blackened by the soot off the engine. He nevertheless managed to sell his sugar. He never said what he got for it, but it must have been less than expected.

There's not a great deal more than that except the recollection of poverty and misery and danger, constant danger which led the family, and of course many other villagers, to grab the opportunity that presented itself to migrate to the United States and start a new life.

*Q: Well, let's talk about Detroit when you were growing up there. You were born right when the Depression really hit.*

HELMAN: That's right.

*Q: And in the place where the Depression hit probably hardest. It was a big industrial city and all of a sudden the money wasn't there. What were your earliest impressions of life in Detroit?*

HELMAN: Well, my earliest impressions of life weren't particularly shaped by knowledge of the Depression. I really didn't know any better since I was born in 1932. Times were tough and the fact that, in retrospect, we lived on a reduced standard was not something I was conscious of when I was two-, three-, four-, five-, six-years-old because that was the only standard I knew and that was the only standard that my acquaintances - others in the neighborhood and the like - had. So that was life. It was only when I grew up that I learned from my parents, from school, that there had been a depression and hard

times and that we were quite poor.

My father was unable to find any work in his trade, which was carpentry, and so he did what he could, which in this case was peddling - push-cart peddling. He had to go out in the countryside to small towns and peddle whatever he could to earn a living and keep the family going until times picked up, as they did in the years just before the Second World War. He was able to get work in his trade. During the war he did mostly renovation work as an independent contractor because there was just no new home construction. Just after the war the housing market picked up hugely and demand for people in the skilled trades was great. The family thereafter did well. My father, in partnership with his immediately younger brother, went into home construction and sales. They built tract housing. I do recall that, certainly in the late '30s, we had an automobile. It wasn't a new automobile but it ran. And we kept it going during much of the war with rationing and all of that. So we must've had some resources.

*Q: As a young boy what role did religion play in your life?*

HELMAN: It was central. But it's curious; you didn't realize it because it never occurred to you that there was an alternative. This is the way you lived; this is the way things were done. After public school you went to religious school. Holidays were observed because that's the way you lived. In that part of Detroit, so many Jewish kids were excused for the holidays that they simply declared a school holiday. So it became very much a part of your consciousness, and of course it was only later in high school, and obviously college, when I realized that there were alternatives or there were other ways of living that were different than what I had in my own home and community. The community was very close and the family was also very close, and in retrospect one realizes that it provided huge support, but at the time, of course I was never conscious of that. You never defined that. I was too young to understand that kind of thing and only as I grew older and looked back did I realize how strong that support was.

I find it interesting that, I believe in the '30s, the women who immigrated to the U.S. from David Horodok formed a... I guess in German it would be a "Landmannschaft," an association of those coming from the same area, in this case, David Horodok. It was a society that was I think driven largely by the women of the families that came from that area. My mother and my grandmother - that is my paternal grandmother; my maternal grandmother died before I was born - were active in it, as were my aunts. But it petered out in the '70s, though it never really died. Then about ten years ago my sister and others whose parents and grandparents had been members, decided to revive it, and it's been hugely successful. The driving forces now behind the society are three and four generations removed from the immigrant experience. It's extremely gratifying to see that. The organization has been quite active in community and charitable work. My mother, who is now 94, remains an active member and is one of the last links to the immigrant generation. My oldest grandson, who is attending a famous yeshiva, or theological seminary in Jerusalem, found a plaque in the yeshiva dedicated to David Horodok, donated by its Israeli chapter, he believes.

*Q: Oh, it is. Have there been trips backs to...*

HELMAN: Yes. There was a trip back about three years ago - I did not go; my sister did - and it was revelatory - in part because there is still a village there but the Jews no longer exist. That was reduced by migration during the 'teens and the '20s. Those remaining were exterminated by the Nazis.

*Q: You went to public school and then what is it called, "shule" after.*

HELMAN: Yes, Hebrew school.

*Q: Let's talk about the public school first. How did you take to schooling? I'm talking about the elementary grade.*

HELMAN: Oh, it was a piece of cake.

*Q: (laughs)*

HELMAN: School for me was always a piece of cake. Almost too easy. I never had to study hard. I enjoyed school, looked forward to it. I was a good learner; I was reasonably gregarious and sociable, so I got along well. Was sort of a joiner and belonged to a lot of school clubs. Schooling for me was in the public schools beginning in the later '30s. I was born in '32 and started kindergarten at five-years-old and went on from there through grade school. I don't have any recollection of being overwhelmed by the difficulty of education or the difficulty of adjusting to social groups and so on. So it was, all in all, a pretty pleasurable experience.

*Q: What about going to school in Detroit, because Detroit attracted, like Chicago, I assume, a lot of different ethnic groups. How did that differ from your school boy view?*

HELMAN: The area in which I grew up was largely Jewish and there were some non-Jewish children but the ethnic diversity wasn't apparent to me until I went to high school, and then it was very much a factor in high school. I went to Cass Tech, a technical high school. It was located in the inner city of Detroit, downtown Detroit, and while it was also a technical high school it was very strong in the sciences, too. I guess it was sort of like Brooklyn Science, on that order, but included also courses directed toward trade skills. It was a city-wide school. One had to have reasonably good grades in junior high and so on to get in there. I decided that that's where I wanted to go, in part because that's where some of my friends were going.

In school before that, what's called middle school in the East, and intermediate school in Detroit - you always walked to school; bussing or being driven to school was never even thought of, never an option. So I walked to school and schools were organized by districts. The student population in the school, certainly in intermediate school, which



comprised the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades, must've been largely Jewish. I think elementary school was a little different. The area where I grew up was a bit mixed but not terribly so. The black population in Detroit, which was quite considerable, was I guess you could say ghettoized to particular areas of the city. One didn't really see them except as janitors or something like that.

*Q: Do you recall in '42 or something when they had the black riots?*

HELMAN: Yes I recall that really quite vividly. Not that I saw any of it, but one heard about it and one expected somehow that it would wash over one's neighborhood, which it never did. It was pretty much restricted geographically in the city, but I was really conscious of it, knew about it, listened constantly to the radio and recall it vividly.

*Q: By the time you got to high school you say you went to a technical school. Does this mean that you were sort of looking at a technical career or any particular subject?*

HELMAN: No, I was looking at a career in the sciences. I was interested in science at the time and Cass Tech had a very strong science curriculum - chemistry, biology, some physics, mathematics and the like. That's what interested me at the time. That was as a supplement to the normal curriculum in English, social studies, and so on that one would normally expect in high school.

The student population at Cass was very mixed ethnically because the curriculum of the high school was organized around various disciplines. There was a science path, but you could take a curriculum devoted to training in various trades such as electrical work, plumbing, metal work, air conditioning, and the like. I recall that there was a great garage down there where students learned auto mechanics.

*Q: Yes, because you're sitting right in the motor capital of the world. So they're probably well-equipped.*

HELMAN: Of course that made sense for a lot of the guys because they would go from there to a very good job in the factory. This was about 1947, '48. So you had a great incentive to get a good technical education. There were two schools like that in Detroit that dealt with the trades or what we would call occupational education now, trade education. The other was Wilbur Wright High School; they did not have a science curriculum but they had very strong mechanical trades - print shop, printing, for example, because in those days one printed by linotype and some handsetting of type and page forms.

*Q: Oh, yes. Oh, God, I took typesetting in...*

HELMAN: So did I. I enjoyed it. *(laughs)*

*Q: I was terrible at it. (laughs) I kept dropping that thing that you'd hold in your hand.*

*Some people are very adept at this sort of side of that.*

HELMAN: You mean the pica stick?

*Q: Yes. Printing was not going to be my career. (laughs)*

HELMAN: Yes. I took print shop. I enjoyed that. As a matter of fact that came in handy later in college; my main non-educational activity in college was on the student newspaper. We had our own print shop down there and we printed our own newspaper so my knowledge of how one put together a page and how one set type by hand was pretty handy. In any event, in Cass Tech, the point I wanted to make was that the mechanical trades, the building trades and the like, attracted students who were not Jewish. Jewish kids didn't go into that, although my father was a damned good carpenter and I used to work summers on the jobs with him. *(laughs)* So the high school itself was really quite diverse. We had a fairly sizeable black student population in high school, but also guys coming from "Hamtramck," the Polish section of Detroit where Dodge Main was. Eastern Europeans generally were prevalent and if one looks over a list of the graduates of the school, the diversity of names is striking.

*Q: How about extra-curricular activities?*

HELMAN: In high school I was on the student newspaper, science club; it was just sort of socializing and a lot of fun, but I enjoyed the newspaper.

*Q: You went to Hebrew school?*

HELMAN: Hebrew school, yes.

*Q: How did you find that? Did Hebrew come easily to you?*

HELMAN: Not really, but Hebrew was dealt with not as a conversational language, but as a liturgical, religious language; so one learned to employ Hebrew in prayer and in biblical studies or beyond that studies of various parts of the Talmud. And I had some of that. I pursued those until I was fourteen-, fifteen-years-old.

*Q: Past the bar mitzvah?*

HELMAN: Yes, past the bar mitzvah.

*Q: Were you at all attracted to that as a vocation?*

HELMAN: Not really as a potential vocation, but it certainly led to my maintaining my identity and my interest in both Judaism and Jewish studies. Not that I pursue them vigorously, but it remained an interest that. I have maintained a certain level of reading in it consistently down through the years and, of course, saw to my children's religious

education, not an especially easy thing to pursue in the Foreign Service.

*Q: By the time the war was over and I take it you were old enough to be able to take some interest in the war as far as...I think it was one of the greatest geography lessons for people of a certain generation, including mine.*

HELMAN: Absolutely.

*Q: But you knew were Tarawa was and Al' Alamayn and Stalingrad and what-have-you. Great geography.*

HELMAN: Certainly, yes. I should add that my family household consisted in addition to my mother and myself and my siblings, my paternal grandmother and my father's youngest brother, my uncle. He and I were really quite close and the fact that he went into the army - he was drafted in probably '42, as I recall - of course inspired me to follow his activities and his travels. He fought in the army in Europe in combat and survived, including through the Battle of the Bulge.

*Q: As you were getting to the end of high school what were you pointed towards? Your parents had not gone to college, which is sort of typical for that whole generation. But were they pointing you? I mean was this sort of understood or were you looking at a profession?*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* Oh, it was assumed - I mean there was just no option - that I would go to college. With that generation and that background, the preferred direction was you headed for medicine or something like that; or if you couldn't do that you'd go to law school. *(laughs)* I should add one thing - that my real passion during all those years was neither school nor any educational pursuit; it was baseball.

*Q: Well, the Detroit Tigers.*

HELMAN: The Detroit Tigers. Children - and I think it was true in any urban area - talk about Chicago or Cleveland or New York and so on, and you were a baseball fanatic and that's what you did when you weren't forced to doing something else. I played baseball when I was a kid and organized our own little leagues. We played pick-up ball and anything we could do. There was no Little League and you learned to conjure up a diamond from almost any level piece of ground.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

HELMAN: And I was introduced to what in those days was called Briggs Stadium, latter named Tiger Stadium, and my first ball game must've been 1940, saw Ted Williams there later, Joe DiMaggio, and certainly after the war one saw all these stars. Hank Greenberg.

*Q: With Hank Greenberg being Jewish and about the only...*

HELMAN: He was idolized.

*Q: I was just going to say. Coming from your background, I think, and the right city and all.*

HELMAN: Well, he had heroic stature. He could do no wrong. And of course he was a terrific ball player.

*Q: Oh, God, yes.*

HELMAN: His career with the Tigers, which I think was pretty much his entire professional career - I guess towards the end he may have gone with Pittsburgh or something like that, or some other team, in the last year or two, but that was immaterial. I was going to say that in Tiger Stadium, in those years, they had a practice whereby the ushers - they had a few professional ushers who used to manage the operation, but the ushers were kids off the street (me and others) - and if you got to the stadium early enough, you used to line up outside a particular gate, this is downtown Detroit, and if you were selected, by God, you got to usher and the thrill of ushering was not so much that you got to show people to their seats and might've made a few cents - I mean at double-headers I made a buck or two which in those days was great money - but you got to see the whole ball game and it was free. And you could take any seat in the house that wasn't occupied. Of course those professionals were like demigods to me, but in retrospect I know some were rum bums. *(laughs)* I watch Pete Gray play. He was the one-armed outfielder for the St. Louis Browns. I also remember the pinch-hitting midget that Bill Veeck used to send up for the Indians. Those were the days. But I ushered in '44 and '45 when the Tigers won the pennant both years, and '44 or '45 when Hank Greenberg returned from the Service and hit the home run that won the league championship for the Tigers. That was a great thrill. But we weren't allowed to usher in the resulting World Series. One of life's crushing moments.

*Q: Dating while you were in high school. Were your parents saying, "Now I hope you're dating a nice Jewish girl."?*

HELMAN: Of course. It goes without saying. There wasn't a great deal of dating. There wasn't a great deal of organized teen activity. I don't think there was actually a word, teen. *(laughs)*

*Q: Well, I don't think teens actually were...there weren't teens, I don't think, until the late '40s.*

HELMAN: I think that's right. We didn't realize...

*Q: We didn't know that...*

HELMAN: We didn't categorize ourselves. There was dating but not a great deal. Number one, it was not an encouraged practice, but something you learned to do in high school because others were doing it whether they were Jewish or non-Jewish. My friends - as it turned out - that I would sometimes go to parties with, were not all Jewish. There were non-Jewish friends. We got along well. I never felt any antagonism towards me because I was Jewish. Maybe I was not terribly sensitive, maybe I was lucky or whatnot. But by and large I valued the high school experience even though it was sometimes a rough crowd. It was a rough part of town. You developed street smarts or so you didn't survive. *(laughs)*

*Q: (laughs) I was talking to somebody the other day who said, you know, a boy's geography is completely different from a parent's geography. There were different half-blocks or some were sort of no-go places. You almost walk to the other side of the street in certain areas; you went through back yards in order to avoid...*

HELMAN: You knew what roads to cross, which alleys to walk in, and which alleys not to walk in. That's true, and I had mine. And in high school you were forced to learn to deal with other kids from a lot of different backgrounds with which you had never had any prior experience. In retrospect you knew this was a contribution to survival. And education. I think Cass Tech was unique. I would not have gotten it had I gone to the district high school, Central, which was largely Jewish - which is where most of my friends went and my sister went, although my two younger brothers followed me to Cass and I think had comparably rewarding experiences. We went there by streetcar. You would travel through the city that way. You learned to do it alone because your mother didn't...you would never ask your mother to accompany you. *(laughs)* So you learn; you grow up.

*Q: When you were getting out of high school what were you looking at?*

HELMAN: There was no second thought to it. When I got out of high school, as I was approaching the transition, it was the University of Michigan and it was a pre-med curriculum. That was it. I didn't give it any second thought.

*Q: Was this what your parents were sort of saying?*

HELMAN: This is where you went and what you did..

*Q: Did your family know any doctors or were there doctors in your family?*

HELMAN: No. There were no doctors in the family. There was no one in the family that, come to think of it, until I went to college, had ever been to college. Or for that matter, except for my sister who was a year older than me, had ever graduated high school in the United States. So these were all paths that were groundbreaking for the family, but that was just something that was assumed. And it's something boys did, girls didn't. My sister, when she graduated high school, was never encouraged to go to college. Something

that she corrected later on in life and became an excellent artist, good enough to hold her own exhibits and sell her paintings. But it was very much a male-oriented society where the son became educated, was expected to establish a career, earn money and raise a family.

*Q: Well, then you were going to the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor?*

HELMAN: That's right.

*Q: You were there from when to when?*

HELMAN: I graduated high school in '49, got my bachelor's degree in '53 and then went on to law school from '53 to '56.

*Q: You know all of a sudden getting into Ann Arbor you were really in the big time. It was a huge university, wasn't it, at that time?*

HELMAN: At that time it was. It's grown hugely since. *(laughs)*

*Q: How did you find it?*

HELMAN: I enjoyed it. I did not have any trouble adjusting although I'm sure that there was an adjustment process that I wasn't terribly conscious of. It was all new to me unlike other students who might have come from a more sophisticated background than I did. But there weren't too many students who had cars, fancy or otherwise, or other things like that. They came from all over the country, but mostly from Michigan. As I recall, I didn't have many friends who matriculated there with me, so I was there pretty much alone. I lived in a smaller dormitory. I was introduced to a roommate who also was from Detroit, but was older than I and, I recall, a junior at the University. We didn't have much in common. He came from a wealthier family than I did. He was also Jewish but had a much different attitude towards Judaism. That certainly was important to me. But we got along tolerably well, though did not socialize.

*Q.: Going back a bit, how about within the family - were you doing much reading on your own? We're talking about elementary school and then high school.*

HELMAN: Always.

*Q: Did they have a Carnegie Library or the equivalent thereof?*

HELMAN: Always. Yes, we went to the public library and checked books out. At that time the family didn't buy many books, couldn't afford many books, but after the war, '46, '47, the family began to prosper, as everybody did, particularly since our father and my uncles were in the building trades industry. My father went from being a carpenter to being a building contractor, building homes and selling them, and made really good

money. I recall we had the first television set on the block, which meant that we were very popular. When the Milton Berle show was on, I think on Tuesday nights, we pretty much had open house. And a little later, my father was able to build a new house in a better section of town; so that was pretty gratifying.

*Q: Within the family, which was often people who were not even high school graduates were actually sort of a la Harry Truman. I mean were doing extensive reading and all this. Was there much table talk about the world?*

HELMAN: Not an awful lot of table talk about the world in the family. Some. Of course there was an intense interest in Israel and in the aftermath of the Second World War and the Jewish refugees and one became conscious of what we now call the Holocaust. It all became a matter of deep concern to the family. And the creation of Israel in the aftermath of the Holocaust directed one's attention to abroad. It seems there were always fund raising campaigns for Israel and for Jewish refugees. Contributing money and support was a continuing responsibility and almost a religious duty. Although my father was not particularly a political person, this was emotionally a matter of great importance, to my mother as well. And that certainly extended to the children, my sister and two younger brothers. We belonged to youth groups that were strongly Zionist. To some extent but table talk was usually about what schooling was like or what's going to happen.

*Q: In baseball?*

HELMAN: Well, my father was not a baseball fan. He thought that the whole thing was a waste of time and never paid much attention. *(laughs)* But I think there was a rather benign attitude that since baseball didn't seem to lead me to any obvious troubles, he had no reason to object. My uncle, my father's youngest brother who lived with us, was a baseball fan as well, so that helped.

*Q: Were you Democrats or Republicans?*

HELMAN: Democrats.

*Q: I was just going to assume that, but... (laughs)*

HELMAN: I should say you voted for Roosevelt and that was it. Anybody who associated with Roosevelt; that was it, Roosevelt was your politics.

*Q: You know in New York within the Jewish community there is, and still remains, sort of a strong, sort of quasi-Marxist, socialist work you're seeing or something. Was this at all an element that you were familiar with in Detroit?*

HELMAN: It was something that I knew existed in Detroit. I recall that some of my relatives were involved in that. It was not something that engaged my family or most of my relatives. As I recall there was a Jewish Workman's Circle, or Arbeiterring, in Detroit.

It rejected religion, but advocated Jewish cultural and political activity. I suspect it was socialist in political ideology. My recollection is that members of the Jewish community who maintained their religious identification, beliefs and practices, did not participate in the socialist political activities of the Workman's Circle. That being said, the paper that my father read, that my mother read, that I certainly looked through, was the Jewish Daily Forward which was shipped every day from New York. It was written in Yiddish and was leftist in orientation.

*Q: The Jewish Daily Forward from New York?*

HELMAN: Oh, yes. There was no equivalent in Detroit.

*Q: Oh, it was not printed in Detroit. It was sort of imported from New York.*

HELMAN: That's right. It was probably brought in by train every morning. My father had a subscription until probably the day he died. And he read it and it was of course all in Yiddish. I learned subsequently that there was always a socialist cast to the politics of the paper. My father read it for news of the world, news of Israel, news of the United States, but also for its literary qualities because the paper had some marvelous authors who serialized their novels there, as Dickens and Dostoevsky did in their newspapers in their day. The Forward carried writers such as Singer and Peretz and, much earlier, Shalom Aleichem. Singer always wrote in Yiddish and his writings were invariably translated into English for a large world audience. The personal columns of the Forward, called "A Bintele Brief" were subsequently translated and are a rich source of anecdotal material on Jewish immigrant life. My father maintained a strong interest in literature in Yiddish, not literature oriented necessarily toward religion, but just literature as written in short stories or novels. He collected a small library that I still have.

*Q: Well, this, of course, is something that I suppose is died out except for the translation, but there was this Shalom Aleichem, Singer and all. There were these wonderful stories about stetl life.*

HELMAN: Not really completely dead. There has been a revival. There is now a Jewish Book Center dedicated to the preservation and development of Yiddish literary culture. I contribute to it yearly. I think it's located near Amherst and it is a project that was begun probably 25 or more years ago to recover, catalogue, and make available books published in Yiddish, and then to also sponsor knowledge of Yiddish as a literary language, as a living language, and to conduct classes, to publish a monthly magazine which is in both English and Yiddish, but which is designed to inspire interest in the language and literature. None of my children or grandchildren were raised with Yiddish, but I was delighted recently to learn that my oldest grandson is learning the language. And of course there is the revival of interest in klezmer music...

*Q: Oh, yes.*



HELMAN: ...which to me was the music I knew when I was a kid. *(laughs)*

*Q: I would imagine in Detroit you would have klezmer, you would have the polkas...*

HELMAN: Whoever in the community or synagogue played the violin or other instrument would get together and the music they played was klezmer music; that's all they knew.

*Q: Were there any of these very extremely orthodox religious communities that you think of as the root of the church?*

HELMAN: In Detroit, of course, in the early years our family was part of the orthodox community, but it wasn't the kind of orthodox community that you would associate with Hasidism or the wearing of some of the traditional clothing. There must've been some of that but it wasn't common. I think it was then largely a New York thing. It certainly exists now in Detroit. The spread of orthodox Chasidic culture and practice has been largely the achievement of the Lubavitcher movement. And they are pretty much global in their activities now.

*Q: What about the Yiddish theater?*

HELMAN: Yiddish theater was very important.

*Q: One thinks of the New York Yiddish theater which was so powerful and has had quite an influence.*

HELMAN: Yiddish theater groups used to go on tour. I recall, with my parents, going to the Yiddish theater and enjoying it tremendously. I was not critically inclined in those days; I didn't know a good performance from a bad performance. It was all a lot of fun. It was plays and vaudeville and the like. There was another tradition there that you don't see anymore - there's some Yiddish theater now; there's some in the Washington area, but very little - and that is famous cantors would go on tour and they would come to particular synagogues; and to attend that synagogue for that event you had to buy tickets to attend the services that they conducted. That's the way cantors, the good ones, made money.

*Q: Yes, I was going to say because that was a money raiser.*

HELMAN: My father used to enjoy hearing them. It also developed in him and in me, as a matter of fact, the love of opera. Cantorial and bel canto techniques are very similar and I suspect go back to the same sources. There were big, profound voices among cantors. In fact some opera stars - Jan Peerce, Richard Tucker, come particularly to mind, and Robert Merrill - were Jewish and moonlighted as cantors.

*Q: What about movies - were they important to you?*

HELMAN: Yes, movies were important but we're not talking about Yiddish movies. Not many were produced, at least that got to Detroit. Going to the movies was what you did on a Saturday or a Sunday afternoon. You went to a matinee. The price was 12 cents, as I recall.

*Q: A double feature of course.*

HELMAN: A double feature and you had the serials as well. The serials were what you went to see.

*Q: Flash Gordon, the Lone Ranger.*

HELMAN: And the double features often were what you had to tolerate to get to the main event. And also radio of course was tremendous.

*Q: Oh, yes, radio. Jack Benny, Fred Allen.*

HELMAN: Jack Benny, the Shadow and Jack Armstrong.

*Q: The All-American Boy.*

HELMAN: The All-American Boy and those serials used to be available late in the afternoon. We would listen to them before dinner. That's where you learned about Wheaties. You knew about Wheaties; you knew about Wheaties and Ovaltine. *(laughs)*

*Q: Were you able to work your Orphan Annie decoder pen and all?*

HELMAN: Oh, all of that. I had it all.

*Q: Speaking of horrible Ovaltine... (laughs)*

HELMAN: Still like it as a matter of fact. *(laughs)*

*Q: (laughs) Well, after the decoder pen, I sort of edged off Ovaltine.*

*In college pre-med really limits what you can do, doesn't it? Or did it?*

HELMAN: Not really. It limits what you can do in your last two years, not much in your first two years. I was lucky. I think I discovered pretty much after my freshman year that I wasn't interested in medicine and I really wouldn't be terribly good at some of the scientific disciplines despite my background. My interests diverged into the softer areas of education. And that was a good thing because medicine would not have proven as satisfying a career for me.

*Q: So did you stop pre-med and become pre-law or something like that?*

HELMAN: I stopped pre-med and adopted history as a major and then moved on to pre-law, although pre-law didn't amount to much except sort of an extended curriculum of social studies..

*Q: Well, tell me, since this is a foreign affairs oral history program, other than Israel, did the outside world intrude on your interests as well?*

HELMAN: Yes. Very much so because at that time one of my strong interests as an extra-curricular activity was the student newspaper, the Michigan Daily. It was a good newspaper - still is.

*Q: This is the university.*

HELMAN: The university, yes. And it had its own building, printing plant and newsroom that I think operated on a pretty good professional level. We printed our own newspaper - didn't shop it out - so we had a printing staff of professional printers downstairs with our own presses. We had a late deadline, so that the paper delivered before breakfast had the most recent available university, state, national and international news. We claimed to have the latest deadline of any newspaper in the state. The Daily had a good circulation to the student body and local townspeople. On the editorial page, we felt quite competent to comment on any development, from local to international. We wrote our opinions on whatever went on in the school, in the city, in the state, the country, and the world. I learned that freedom of the press and of speech were wonderful.

*Q: Do you recall any of the issues that particularly...usually students can take on causes that sometimes get the elders a little bit annoyed.*

HELMAN: I think the causes we took on were causes that related to the university itself, the role of fraternities, the role of athletics - and I typically took a contrarian view; I was no fraternity boy. *(laughs)*

*Q: Were you anti-football?*

HELMAN: No, no, no. Anti-football I was not. I had more sense than that. I enjoyed football. *(laughs)*

*Q: I was going to talk about windmills tilt against Michigan.*

HELMAN: No, I was part of the windmill. *(laughs)* Michigan didn't have a very good football team in those days. *(laughs)* My first year, 1949, we won the Rose Bowl; after that we went downhill.

*Q: You mentioned fraternities and all. In a way, and I may be wrong in this, this is sort of*

*the last gasp of the old establishment anti-Semitism, wasn't it? Or was it still around? Did you feel that?*

HELMAN: Yes, but I didn't feel that. It must've been there. I'm sure there was but it's not something that I was especially affected by. It didn't constantly shape my attitude towards fraternities. I just felt that it was elitist, it was a way of excluding others, and contributed - as far as I was concerned - nothing to university life. Hazing was always to me a foolish practice. The fraternity boys sometimes carried it a bit far. Of course they got drunk all the time but then again so did everybody else. *(laughs)*

*Q: Except I've mentioned both of us were spending most of our time reading diplomatic history.*

HELMAN: Hell. *(laughs)*

*Q: You know on Saturday nights, go to the library and get a good book on diplomatic history. (laughs)*

HELMAN: It was a great deal of fun. The newspaper in its own way proved to be a most valuable educational experience.

*Q: When you were taking history were you concentrating on any particular area?*

HELMAN: I became interested in American history. And European history, medieval history, caught my imagination and I recall that much of my work, much of my reading, was in that area. And also intellectual history. I'm not sure it was the best preparation for law or the Foreign Service, but I never really thought about it.

*Q: I've never really thought of what is good preparation.*

HELMAN: I've got my own views on that now. I did take German; I think in retrospect that was helpful. I think the best preparation for the Foreign Service is language and area studies, with some minors in economics, science, political science. Something like that I think is a good preparation. Otherwise I'm not sure what is. I would not recommend concentration in international relations as preparation for the Foreign Service; subscribing to and reading the New York Times would probably teach you more..

*Q: How about the Korean War and the Cold War itself; how did this affect the campus at all?*

HELMAN: The Korean War was followed intensely, certainly by those of us on the newspaper. I, together with probably most students at the University, had an exemption from the draft. They weren't hard to get. I don't know of anyone who was drafted off campus. It didn't happen. On campus you had a haven and it was really the other guys who went to war.

It's not something I regretted, particularly when the stories began coming in about the very bloody and sometimes almost desperate nature of that war. The Cold War, certainly, and the Korean War were matters of discussion in the newspapers, not so much when students gathered. You talked about football or maybe domestic politics. This was the end of the Truman Administration and the beginning of Eisenhower's. It was also the beginning of the McCarthy period.

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: I recall domestic politics and the election of '52. You recall that after about 1950, '51, Harry Truman was always, while president, a highly controversial fellow and his activities and programs, particularly on the domestic front, were matters of considerable discussion, argument, debate nationally and also on campus - at least among those with me on the Daily. You had the young Republicans, young Democrats, but they were not as active as they are today. During my undergraduate days, civil rights began emerging as a major campus and national issue.

*Q: Was there, at that time, any sort of campus Marxism, which later became quite the thing particularly after the Vietnam business?*

HELMAN: I think that was something that developed after my time. There were some radicals on campus; I was aware of them, I didn't have much to do with them. But there weren't any demonstrations. Ann Arbor, then and certainly subsequently, was famous for radicalism and as the birthplace of some very active radical groups. Campus radicalism was not a major factor in the life of the campus community during my time although that changed dramatically with the civil rights and anti-Vietnam war movements.

*Q: Where did you go to law school and how did the family take this?*

HELMAN: Well, they were a little disappointed I think, but not overwhelmingly so. I think they would've preferred still that I continue with medicine, but I should add that there was a great deal of trust in the family in how I was doing. I was never a delinquent. So they were certainly supportive of my decision. I took the law school qualification exam and did well on it. I was accepted at Michigan's law school. My two younger brothers compensated for my career decision. They are both doctors.

*Q: The LSAT or something.*

HELMAN: Yes. And I felt that those were pieces of cake. One thing I did learn is how to pass tests. *(laughs)*

*Q: No, it's a real art. I was with the Board of Examiners at one time and every once in a while we would run across just plain exam-passers. You know, you'd get these people and you'd wonder where did they come from. I mean these people could take any exam*

*you think of and pass it, but they didn't really have the background to sustain their...*

HELMAN: I may be one of those. I don't know. *(laughs)*

*Q: I'm sure you're in-the-know. (laughs) No, this is what the oral exam takes care of. So you went to law school. Did you go all the way through?*

HELMAN: I went all the way through and became a member of the Michigan Bar.

*Q: And then what?*

HELMAN: Well, by that time I was married. My wife and I met and married at the close of our undergraduate year. She was also a Michigan student. We met and fell in love and got married then, so we were mutually working our way through school.

*Q: What was her background?*

HELMAN: Her background is also Detroit.

*Q: From working class or professional?*

HELMAN: Her father owned a moving company, so I guess business class, middle class. They're nice people, and my wife, Dolly, was their only child - also the first family member to go to college. So I worked when I was in law school.

*Q: What were you doing?*

HELMAN: Anything. I worked selling Fuller Brushes, on the University grounds crew, in the library and also in factories. Several summers I worked in the Willow Run plant. You may not know where...

*Q: I know Willow Run, of course.*

HELMAN: Willow Run was a great industrial plant where bombers were made during the war.

*Q: Liberator bombers, four-engine B-24s.*

HELMAN: That's right, and then after the war it was taken over by General Motors and I worked on the automatic transmission line, inspecting pump covers for GM's Hydromatic transmissions. Automatic transmissions were the hot new technology in the auto business. So I learned a little about one small piece of one very large piece of machinery.

*Q: Well, you were a union member then?*

HELMAN: No, I wasn't. Since I was there as a summer worker the union didn't insist that I join. It was a great experience. Of course you had to sweat because factories weren't air conditioned at all and you had to learn to suffer through a Detroit summer with its heat and humidity - the humidity was really pretty bad - in a factory setting. You were just assigned to a particular assembly line and you got to know the workers on that line, but we had little in common. *(laughs)* They were good to me. They certainly didn't begrudge me my background and the fact that I was in college and going to law school. They were friendly and helpful and I learned a lot from them. They were dedicated to the union; unionism was extremely important and the management was a hostile force. The memory of the depression years and the struggle to unionize was very fresh to them. And the management started with the foreman and then certainly proceeded from there to anybody who wore a white shirt, and anybody who wore a jacket was fit for hanging or something definitive like that. So you certainly learned to recognize, and to some extent to sympathize with, the perspective of an industrial worker. The experience has stuck with me. That may be the reason that Labor Law was my highest scoring subject in Law School.

That was also the time when automation was starting. Automation then didn't consist of computer driven stuff, the automation you think of today. It consisted of more sophisticated pieces of machinery that performed multiple functions, or absorbed the functions of a half dozen simpler, older pieces of machinery. Therefore it would displace workers because on the old assembly line you would roughly have one worker for each piece of machinery, running that machine, but you didn't need that when you had a big machine that did multiple functions and did them all well and maybe required one worker to keep watch and maybe punch a button occasionally. You saw the hostility and real fear building up in the guys on the line - who after all were my guys - at what they saw as the threat of automation coming at them. They were starting to automate lines with more sophisticated machinery, and these guys were not above taking a monkey wrench and literally breaking that machinery. But of course automation happened and the workers adapted or were displaced or replaced. It was a hard lesson.

*Q: In law school were you pointed towards anything within law or how did you find law?*

HELMAN: I found law to be quite engaging, quite interesting, and a very good intellectual discipline. The Law faculty was outstanding and I established lasting relationships with several professors. Law really forced the examination of language and how it is employed to describe or prescribe relationships. Law teaches how to express relationships with precision or, if need be, with degrees of ambiguity. In my case it really sharpened my mental faculties and how I addressed and analyzed problems, addressing them in a systematic fashion; learning to analyze, learning to define relationships, to identify the factors in those relationships, how to express them, how to organize them, which is what a lawyer does. But also, at the end of the day, I reached the conclusion that I wasn't terribly interested in practicing law. *(laughs)* But law, itself, I've held in respect and I still maintain an interest in law and its development. In some of my subsequent work in State, my legal background came in very handy, for example in working with the Legal

Advisor's office on the Outer Space Treaty. And certainly now in the private sector, I'm dealing very frequently with lawyers and law firms on telecommunications regulatory issues, business and contract matters. I find, by the way, that senior business executives are much better versed on legal and legislative issues than are foreign service officers on matters of international law, which too many dismiss as peripheral, or legislation affecting international operations. Despite the fact that my law school experience is now quite distant, still I think it did provide a very valuable intellectual discipline.

*Q: Well, you got out of law school in '56, passed the Michigan Bar Exam, but then what?*

HELMAN: Well, by that time I had decided that I wanted to take the bar exam and pass it so at least I had that under my belt and I could practice law if I had to, if I decided to practice law. I interviewed a number of law firms; I was interested really in moving away from the Detroit and Michigan area. I interviewed in New York and the like. I was a good student, not a superior student, and starting salaries in even big city law firms in those days were not exactly generous. I mean today, my goodness, I wouldn't have dreamt of making such salaries. In addition, large and established New York law firms were not especially welcoming to Jews. I was not satisfied with my interests or prospects in the law, so I looked around for something else. I saw an announcement - literally, on a bulletin board in the law school- of the Foreign Service exam. I took it. This was, I think, in the first half of my final year. It must've been late in '55 or early '56.

*Q: It usually is the first Saturday in December.*

HELMAN: Something like that. And as I said I'm an expert at passing exams so the Foreign Service exam posed no terrors for me and I passed it. Must've been the spring of '56 I was invited to take an oral exam so I flew down to Cincinnati. I don't know how they're handled now.

*Q: They still travel around.*

HELMAN: In those days I think they went to the circuit court seat and interviewed applicants from states in that circuit. So I was asked to come down and I took my first airplane flight down there on a DC-3 and I got sick as a dog. *(laughs)* It was terrible.

*Q: (laughs)*

HELMAN: Fortunately I landed late in the afternoon and I had a night to recover. Then I took my oral exams. I forget who in the world was on my panel.

*Q: Do you recall any of the questions?*

HELMAN: Not really. It lasted an hour or two. I wasn't terribly impressed, by the way, by the panelists, but you know I was properly respectful and I thought I handled myself reasonably well. I didn't sense any hostility or any negativity on the part of the examiners.



This was all a new experience to me. We did talk about some issues in foreign affairs, probably my background, my law interests and the like, but not an awful lot. I recall it as a reasonably pleasant, non-abrasive experience. Not too long after that - at least I think it was the late spring of '56 because I remember the weather was quite good - I got an offer and I entered in the November '56 class.

*Q: We'll pick this up in November or so of 1956 when you went into the Foreign Service. One last question though. How did your wife feel about this?*

HELMAN: She was always very supportive. In part, maybe in retrospect, because she didn't know what was in store. *(laughs)* But it was an adventure. And it was a paying job. She had traveled around the country; I had done no traveling at all. So my flight down to Cincinnati was the first time I was on an airplane and I think probably only the third or fourth time I had been out of the state. So all of this was a huge adventure but we were ready for it. Actually I had been to New York on law firm interviews. But it was an adventure and we were looking forward to it. She was very supportive. By that time we had our first child, our daughter Ruth.

*Q: Gerry, let's start with 1956. I take it you took that basic officer course, which is now called the A-100 course. Can you characterize or describe the officers in your course; where were they coming from and what did you think about them at the time?*

HELMAN: I'm not sure I can be terribly precise. I remember some of them very well because they became long-standing friends. Stape Roy was in my class as was Jim Lowenstein and a couple of others. Larry Eagleberger was in the October class. I don't have any really strong recollections except that it was interesting, not terribly stressful. I'm not sure I learned an awful lot when I was in the A-100 course. The one recollection I had is that we had just one or two women in the course and at the time my recollection is that if a woman Foreign Service officer ever dared to marry she had to offer her resignation from the Service. I think there were two women in my Foreign Service A-100 class and I don't think either of them survived. I'm not sure what happened, I lost track. One of them may have made the mistake of getting married. *(laughs)* Those were the days. *(laughs)*

*Q: (laughs) Oh, yes. When I was doing one of these interviews some woman said, "Well, you didn't pass the Foreign Service exam, but why don't you try and marry a nice Foreign Service officer. You'd be married to the Foreign Service." (laughs)*

HELMAN: *(laughs)*

*Q: Did you have any idea what you wanted to do during the A-100 course?*

HELMAN: Not really, I must confess. I had never traveled abroad before. My interest in foreign affairs was largely intellectual or based upon my paying attention to current events. I had only a vague knowledge of what it took to function overseas. Nobody in my

family, nobody in my background, had ever entered that kind of profession, so it was all new. I had very little to go on. In addition, one of my considerations was I had a wife and one very young child - my first child, my daughter - and it wasn't too long before we had another, our second daughter, Deborah. Of course my choice of assignment had to take into account my young family and my limited financial resources. But in any event my first assignment was to the Department and that was welcome, at least at that point, because it helped with the family situation being stable since my older daughter at that time was an infant in arms and as I say before too long another was on the way. It was only thereafter that my wife and I felt, for two reasons, that we were prepared to go overseas. One was that I became a little impatient with the very limited job that I had in the Department at that time and also you may recall that the pay was pretty poor.

*Q: Oh, yes. I came in I think at 3,400, which wasn't great. I mean it wasn't awful but it wasn't great.*

HELMAN: Well, you could put three square meals on the table and pay your rent but it didn't leave much beyond that.

*Q: Particularly in Washington.*

HELMAN: That's right. And so an overseas assignment looked pretty attractive. But my first assignment, and that was something I requested, I mean I requested a stateside assignment initially and was in what was called INR. It was in some sort of coordinating division in INR and the one thing that was valuable about that was the guy who headed the office, a marvelous fellow with whom I established a really good friendship, Bill Steadman. Bill was a Latin American specialist and an extremely decent fellow. He seemed quite sensitive to my needs and I think appreciated what I was trying to do for the office. And don't ask me to describe what in the world that was.

*Q: That was just what I was going to do. (laughs)*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* Because I'm not sure I could describe it without...

*Q: Well, you were coordinating, was that right?*

HELMAN: We were coordinating, whatever that was, and I think it probably consisted of making sure that the various elements in the Department that were supposed to have an interest in the kind of product INR provided, in fact received it and so on. It did not involve much substance, and I'm not sure it really had a useful managerial function, and I doubt if it still survives. I hope it doesn't. *(laughs)* I did get to know some career intelligence types, some really smart people, and those contacts served me well in the future. For example, Peter Colms, who was one of our outstanding China types. I used to visit him in part because his office in old SA-1, which was where the E Street expressway is today, overlooked the construction of New State. Big project, and I was an unapologetic sidewalk superintendent, as was Peter. He had figured out the amount of

earth removed as measured in Chinese caddies.

*Q: Well, I'm sure there's something there; it's probably got three times as many people doing it now.*

*Did you get any feel for any country or any interest in some area with this? You're kind of the new kid on the block, wide-eyed, looking around and sampling the wares.*

HELMAN: Not really. I probably was more interested in Europe than any other area because I felt more comfortable given my educational background and I had some qualifications in German, for example. So Europe seemed to be a natural choice but my recollection is that when I was asked to choose an area I decided I was going to be really gung-ho and I wanted to go to Asia; I wanted to go to Chiang Mai, which I think had a vacancy at that time. The personnel people, in their wisdom, decided to reward me with an economic job in London. *(laughs)* And, you know, I was never thereafter assigned to Asia. And for reasons which escape me, because I never tried to avoid an assignment there or anywhere else.

I'd say my biggest disappointment that first year was an incident that had something of a lasting negative impact on me. My INR assignment was for two years. However, after 8-10 months, I really began to feel the economic pinch of living in Washington. I went to the my personnel advisor, a mid-level FSO, I would say more of the Old School. I explained to him my situation. I said, "I think I'd really like to be assigned overseas and I'm quite open to where I might be assigned." I said I really felt that it was financially very tough for me now and wanted an assignment overseas. I was ready for it professionally, but also financially it would help me a great deal. And his reaction stung me to the point that I almost had no reply. He asked "You mean you don't have a private income?" He was serious.

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: And I was stunned.

*Q: Yes. Well, I came in, in '55, and there were still an awful lot of these guys around. I mean we were a whole new breed. I remember an ambassador's wife at one of our postings tell the other wives, "Well, I suppose you're all going to take your children and go down to the Cote d'Azur for the summer," and they all kind of looked at us. This is Belgrade. What? Where? Taking your nanny, you know. I mean just didn't have a clue.*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* Yes. They didn't have a clue and more to the point I think they had no idea where the new breed was coming from. And you're right; at that time I think the Foreign Service started diversifying quite considerably, and quite properly and consciously. And ours was I think some of the earliest classes which reflected that diversity, certainly in a geographic sense. But the consequences of that for the Foreign Service took some time to float upward through the middle or senior levels, at least in my

experience. That changed over time.

*Q: Well, they died out essentially.*

HELMAN: They died out but also I think that some of the more senior people who came from the more traditional Foreign Service background developed a better understanding of what the issues were and what their responsibilities were. I had thereafter two very good experiences with supervisors at my first two posts who were quite helpful to me in my career. And I think they would qualify as Old School. I never went to London as a first assignment; while I was taking some leave at home, and about two weeks before my family and I were due to depart for London, we were informed that our first assignment was now Milano. And after the initial shock because I didn't have a bloody word of Italian, we went to Milano.

*Q: So you were there in '57?*

HELMAN: I went there in '58.

*Q: You were in Milano from '58 to when?*

HELMAN: '60.

*Q: Let's talk about how you saw Italy at that time and then we'll talk about Milano.*

HELMAN: Italy was exciting. First of all the Italians are extraordinarily good-natured people. Particularly if you're wandering around with a couple of tiny children they feel very solicitous and protective of you, particularly of your wife. They sort of look at this husband with a fishy eye, because my wife is rather petite and looked very young despite the fact that we're roughly the same age. I always had the feeling Italians thought that I must've been doing something wrong to inflict two infants on such a young lady.

In any event, once we found a place to live, once we found some help, got a car, I concentrated on work. The Consulate General, which it was at the time, was well run. It was a small group with a number of young officers and the guy in charge, the Consul General, Charlie Rogers, and his deputy, Doug Coster, were very decent people. Charlie was probably I guess at that time what they considered a senior officer, probably an FSO-2 or something like that. I was there as a consular officer, vice consul. I did a little commercial work for about six months and then they put me in charge of the consular section and Charlie's attitude was, "I'm not interested in consular work, I'm interested in political work. You'll be doing your job if you make sure that I'm never bothered with any of the consular problems." (*laughs*) Doug Coster was the number two and Doug was a very fine man. He administered the Consulate General. He was the economic officer, I recall, as well as being number two in the consulate.

The consular section of the consulate, which I was put in charge of after about six months

in the consulate general, had all the consular functions except immigration visas. Thank God. It was welfare protection, citizenship, passports, non-immigration visas and the like. I had an outstanding Italian local staff; we called them "locals." They were marvelous professionally, and very solicitous. They made sure that I was well-insulated from any possibility of making mistakes. *(laughs)* And we rather liked each other. As a matter of fact one of them, my principal local consular assistant - her name was Lauri Cantele - was later married to a prominent resident American businessman and she and her husband became very close friends of my wife and myself, and we've maintained that friendship to this day. I just treasure that. But they were very direct with me, very solicitous, very kind, made sure I learned the ropes. It was in many ways the best, and in some ways the most responsible, job I ever had in the Foreign Service because I truly was in charge. I enjoyed it tremendously.

*Q: What were the politics of Milano at that point?*

HELMAN: You know I'm not sure. I didn't follow the politics that much. I paid attention more to the local police and related bureaucracy.

*Q: Bologna is always known as a red belt in that area there, but Milano was...*

HELMAN: Milano, despite its role as Italy's business and financial center, was probably governed by the socialists. It certainly wasn't communist.

*Q: During that time it was the beginning of a lot of American students, and actually from other countries too, beginning their wander year in coming up. Things in Europe had settled down after the war and so the kids could take their year off and wander around and get into trouble. Consular officers get another trouble. Did you have any...*

HELMAN: That's right. Oh, tons of them.

*Q: Can you tell me something about some of them?*

HELMAN: Lots of students of voice used to come to Milan for obvious reasons because you had the tradition of La Scala. There were many voice students who - in many instances - were strung along by voice teachers. I'm not sure how qualified some of these voice teachers were. I suspect a fair number were mediocrities. Often the students got into trouble, sometimes just financial trouble - ran out of money. Sometimes they got into rather shady activities and sometimes some of the young ladies got into even shadier activities in Milan in order to make a living. And they used to come by the consulate for advice, help in terms of money I couldn't give them. Sometimes my wife and I treated a bunch of them to a meal at home or something like that, but there were so many. You didn't want to develop a reputation as a meal ticket or a food kitchen so we had to be a bit careful. A lot of them were nice and as far as I was concerned had great voices and provided great entertainment at dinner. They all were persuaded they were just an inch or two away from soloing at La Scala. You had to be careful how you responded to inquiries

from their parents. They were, after all, mostly adults. So they got into trouble but older Americans got into all kinds of troubles as well.

My first stunning experience, not too long after I took on the consular section, was a TWA (Trans World Airlines) crash on take off from Malpensa airport, the principal airport in Milan. I remember it vividly. It crashed into a field about twenty miles from the airport and of course there were many dead Americans on board. I went to the crash site to assist in identification and also to recover the diplomatic bags on board. Boy, that was an experience.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

HELMAN: Because they had some pouches on board I had to recover and so on. That was a maturing experience I would say. Emotionally it was hard-hitting. But one did the job and got the bodies organized and so on.

*Q: Well, did you have families and parents coming and besieging you from the States or was this pretty much taken care of by a phone call, telegram, that sort of thing?*

HELMAN: Phone call, telegram, yes. We didn't have any outside help coming in. We got a little help; I think the embassy in Rome sent somebody up to help out on all the detail work, and so on because there was quite a bit of it. And of course the Italian authorities were very good, very efficient in the recovery process, the recovery of personal effects and so on, assembly of the identification. They didn't have all the forensic tools of today but I think they did a good job. The scene of the accident was pretty grim, wreckage all over the bloody place.

*Q: Did it hit other buildings or did it...*

HELMAN: No, it came down in an open farmer's field outside of Milan. I think it was twenty miles outside. That was my responsibility together with Doug Coster, who as number two in the consulate, stepped up to help a lot. And of course there were other unusual events that occurred. One, my favorite story in a way, occurred in my first few months when I was sitting in my office in the consulate general and this rather tall, imposing gentleman walks in and says, "My name is John Paul Getty. I'd like you to witness my will." I knew who John Paul Getty was. I had no idea that he ever got to Milan. I said, "I'm sure I can but I'd like to double-check to see whether it's a fee or a non-fee service." (*laughs*) How's that for quick thinking? It was a non-fee service, by the way.

*Q: He was one of the richest men in the world, I think.*

HELMAN: Yes. One of the richest men in the world and I subsequently discovered that he had a son living in Milan. Subsequently you may recall his grandson was kidnaped in Italy, in Rome and had his ear cut off during the ransom negotiations. It was my

impression that Getty was not particularly beloved by his children. But the will I witnessed was the will that was taken to probate for the disposition of Getty's estate after he died in the late '70s. I recall as he was leaving, I asked, "Mr. Getty, do you have a car or do you want me to call a taxi?" and he told me, "No, I'll walk. It'll save me some money." (*laughs*)

The final chapter in that story occurred many years after when he died and I wondered whether the will I had witnessed was his final will. I was at that time deputy assistant secretary in 1977, '78, and sure enough his attorneys called up and asked if they could interview me and asked me to validate my signature. I said, yes, that's my signature and so on, and they asked me if there was anything I wanted. I knew that I couldn't ask for a piece of the estate (*laughs*). I asked if it were possible for me to have a copy of the will. And they said yes, that's proper since it's now been put into probate and it's a public document. To this day I have a copy of that will.

*Q: (laughs) In Milan, how did you find the Italian society there? You know, sort of the movers and shakers. Were they easy to penetrate or not? One of the problems in Italian society is everybody goes home and has Sunday dinner with mama. The family is so important that in a way it's a little difficult to get... Did friendships develop there?*

HELMAN: Yes, some friendships developed. I'm not sure to what extent they penetrated the internal family, probably not, but as I mentioned, my wife and I became firm friends with Lauri Cantele - her married name is now Kalnan. She came from a very prominent Milanese family, who we got to know, as well. And there were a couple of other good relationships we established that I think had some depth, to the extent that we were invited the family home in Como and meet the family and have dinner. So there was something more than casual about some of our relationships. Certainly on a superficial level it was easy to get along with Italians at all levels, particularly after you pick up some of the language - and I was beginning to pick up the language, by necessity, for no other reason than if I had a situation in which an American was in trouble, I would have to figure out how to help, and English was not widely known among Italians, much less Italian cops. And Americans have marvelous ability to get into all kinds of bloody scrapes. You did the practical thing to get the job done. It was great training. I enjoyed it.

*Q: Did you find the Italian police you had to deal with understood sort of the general counsel rule is you go up as American counsel and say, "Look, this person may have done something stupid; let's get them out of the country and let's not bother either of our places. Let's move them on?"*

HELMAN: Sometimes there was some of that, but I must say I never had any real problems with the Italian police. They usually had more serious things to worry about than some the petty misbehavior of some American. Italians defer to titles; of course I was only a "vice console" but I was immediately elevated to "console" and "eccellenze" - so the title helped. Good manners and proper deference on my part also helped; they appreciated that. An effort to speak their language does wonders in that kind of situation

and they were very helpful. I don't think I had a bad experience. I think the only time I was conscious of them cutting corners wasn't really in deference to me. I don't know if you follow jazz, but at that time and even subsequently, there was quite a famous American jazz trumpeter whose name was Chet Baker. Chet was just a marvelous musician but badly on drugs at that time. I met him first when the manager of one of the principal hotels in Milano - I think it was the concierge from the Principe de Savoia which was only three blocks away from the consulate - called and said, "You better come over here. We've got Chet Baker here and he seems to be in some real medical troubles." He had gone on a heroin binge as it turned out and had overdosed. He was in a bad way. There was a doctor in attendance when I got there. He came out of it and we chatted. We got him some further medical attention and there was a police report. The police sort of waived it off. They didn't want to take on a jazz musician who was well-known in Italy at that time. I think they gave him a warning. I don't think he ever went on the wagon and during our occasional conversations thereafter he once confided in me that he knew drugs would kill him. About six months after that my wife and I went to hear him play in a club on the island of Elba. We talked, but it was hard for me to tell if he was clean or not - probably not. I recall a year or two later he was found unconscious and bloody in the toilet of a gasoline station outside Rome. Again he had overdosed and was really in quite a bad way. I think the police arrested him that time and put him in a facility of some sort, some recovery facility.

I, of course, followed Chet's career and recordings thereafter. His career was a long one musically, but one also spent in and out of jail and various facilities because of his addictions. He died just a few years ago. He was a helluva musician. But generally the police were quite happy to get misbehaving Americans out of their jurisdiction. *(laughs)*

*Q: Oh, yes. I mean that's the principal counselor weapon really. You just go in there very nicely, hat in hand, and say, "Maybe we can work this out." (laughs)*

HELMAN: There were only a couple occasions when an American got in such a scrape that I felt they were beyond my help. *(laughs)*

*Q: You know you would say run into the "old guard" at the State Department. How did your wife find this first overseas experience? Were the Americans there at the consul general supportive?*

HELMAN: Yes, they were good. That was a satisfying experience. Both Charley Rogers and his wife, Doris, had us participate in various representational events, so we began to develop some skills at that. They had a knockout penthouse in downtown Milan. Oh, it was gorgeous. The building was called the "Torre Valesca" and it probably still exists. I'm not sure if the consul general resides there anymore. But they entertained and they involved us frequently enough so that we got some experience. My wife was responsible for the shopping and our two daughters, both of whom were barely out of infancy. They went to Italian kindergartens and nursery school and they of course were totally bilingual in Italian. And we had sort of a nanny, or a maid of all work, who was Italian and who



spoke only Italian, so that helped our Italian. So it was pretty good. I enjoyed that.

We couldn't afford to live downtown, but did find a nice apartment sort of off the central park in Milano proper. We learned how to shop, including at supermarkets that were then just being introduced. But most of the shopping was done at small neighborhood shops, you know, within a block and a half you could buy your fresh vegetables and fruit and beef and the rest from your local merchant. And that was a lot of fun.

*Q: While you were there did you start thinking about what area and what type of work you wanted to do within the Foreign Service or did you get much feel for that?*

HELMAN: Yes, I wanted to do political work. I was interested and felt qualified. But in those days the Foreign Service pursued a good program that, if you recall, in the first couple of tours exposed the junior officer to a variety of Foreign Service functions. They didn't have this current cone system, which I think is a seriously flawed approach.

*Q: Yes. A horrible thing to explain, but it's what specialty of...*

HELMAN: No. They didn't want you to specialize. They wanted you to get some idea of what the Foreign Service is like. So, as I said, in Milan I did some commercial work for about six months and I did all the consular work for a year and a half and was in charge of the consular section - for a junior officer that was pretty good. The next step should be political work and I was sent to Vienna, which also gave me bragging rights. I think I may be the only FSO who had successive tours at La Scala and the Staatsoper.

*Q: Well, then you went from Milano to Vienna. You were there from '60 to ?*

HELMAN: '62.

*Q: And you were a political officer?*

HELMAN: Junior political officer.

*Q: Who was our ambassador when you were there?*

HELMAN: Doc Matthews.

*Q: He's one of the major names of the old Foreign Service. I mean I'm speaking of the good side.*

HELMAN: Oh, yes.

*Q: You've got George Kennan and Chip Bohlen and then Doc Matthews. Did you have much contact with him or see him that often?*

HELMAN: Not an awful lot. I think he could do that job spending about a half hour day. *(laughs)* He was extremely, extremely good. I learned a lot from his deputy, David Wainhouse. But I think the guy whose mentoring was most valuable to me was my political counselor, Tap Bennett. He and his wife, Margaret, were really Old School Foreign Service. Tap was certainly old school and from Georgia. Margaret came from a distinguished Foreign Service background. They took an interest in Dolly and me, and we were deeply appreciative. I helped put together dinner parties and would seat people at the table and learned some protocol. And as you know, protocol in diplomatic life is terribly important, particularly if you want to pursue a career on the political side of the house. So their interest and their mentoring were immensely beneficial to us and we deeply appreciated it. I also used to tag along with Tap as notetaker when he went to the Foreign Ministry, and under his guidance established some excellent contacts there in the Minister's Cabinet. Tap had "style." Tap is someone with whom I maintained a relationship really down through the years, when he was our Ambassador to NATO and Permrep to the UN in New York. One of my proudest moments was when I was ambassador in Geneva I was able to give a dinner in his honor. That was terrific, and I think Tap felt pretty good about it, as well.

Tap was dedicated to the Foreign Service and because it was a small political section; there were, I think, only four or five of us, I generally was included in meetings and knew what was going on. This was of course in the aftermath of the occupation that ended only in 1955. The State Treaty had been signed. I was responsible for following the fringe parties, the Communist Party on the left and what is called the Freiheitliche Partei - I guess it's now translated as the Freedom Party - on the right. They were both pieces of work, both of these parties.

*Q: Tell me, as a young political officer, did you get much in the way of somebody sitting down and saying, "Okay, Gerry, you've written this up, now I'm going to show you how to really do it?" In other words, were you learning how to draft?*

HELMAN: Yes. I was learning how to draft, I was learning how to go into a domestic political situation and handle myself. I accompanied Tap or his deputy, John Fisher, to call on the Foreign Ministry and make a presentation of whatever it was, take notes, write up MEMCONS (Memoranda of Conversation), write cables, write reports of various sorts. We used to have the OMs at that time...

*Q: That's operations memorandum.*

HELMAN: Yes, the format you used to submit material that may not have been worthy of a telegram. Telegrams, of course, were kind of special in those days. *(laughs)* And you almost never used the phone. At my next post, Barbados, I learned to encrypt and decrypt telegrams using a one-time pad. So it was very much a Service at that time that communicated through more formal written material. If you couldn't put something in writing in a clear and convincing fashion, couldn't analyze or derive a recommendation, you were lost. I mean you weren't a very good political officer in that event. And so the

typical skills that one had to learn as a political officer were available to me for learning when I was in Vienna because we did the full range of political, presentational and representational work. And when it came to attending an open political meeting, let's say a Communist rally, I went alone because my German was reasonably good. Or I would go alone to a Bierhalle and attend a rally of the "Freiheitliche." Watching these old Nazis in their old uniforms, holding their battle flags was quite an experience for a Jewish kid from Detroit. I learned to handle myself. Never felt much in danger even though I stuck out. And I learned to comprehend some of the Viennese regional dialects, which was no easy thing. I was rather pleased with myself.

I was given a special assignment to do a report on the implementation of one of the provisions of the State Treaty regarding certain rights accorded to the Slovenian minority in Carinthia. So I went down to Carinthia and visited with the local dignitaries and visited schools and talked to people. I thereafter wrote a pretty good report in an OM to the Department that covered both the Slovenian situation but also that of the Hungarian minority in the Burgenland, Austria's easternmost province. So I got some pretty good experience. Made good friends among the a couple of the younger Austrian official. I never tried to establish close contacts with the principals of the parties I was following, although I got to know some of the individuals. My fringe parties were largely powerless, beyond a certain nuisance factor. I did get to establish good relationships with some of the younger Foreign Office officials. I got to know Foreign Minister Kreisky a bit, got to know some younger Austrian Foreign Service officers who later became quite prominent in their Foreign Ministry. One of them, Peter Jankowitch, was long-time ambassador of Austria to the United Nations (UN) at the time that I became fairly senior in the State Department on UN affairs. So that contact had staying power. Jankowitch subsequently became Austria's foreign minister.

*Q: You're mentioning the border lands. Did you get involved with the South Tirol?*

HELMAN: South Tirol was a constant issue. That wasn't handled particularly by me but I did learn a lot about it and that was of course sort of a flashpoint in Austrian foreign policy. I also had some idea of Italian attitudes from my service in Milan.

*Q: Well, you'd come from Milano, so did you find...I mean here you straddled the issue in a way. I mean how did you...*

HELMAN: I never dealt with the substance of the issue when I was in Milano. I was handling consular affairs, which allowed me to travel up in that area - it's a beautiful area - mostly to provide some consular services to American citizens who couldn't travel to me. So I said I'll go ride circuit. It's a nice circuit to ride.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

HELMAN: But in Austria the South Tirol question was handled by either Tap Bennett or by his deputy.

*Q: I've heard people say quite recently that the problem with Austria is that it used to be the center of an empire and that's what its function was; and the empire is almost completely gone and it's sort of a country without a role.*

HELMAN: A capitol without a hinterland.

*Q: Yes, a capitol without a hinterland; and that means that you've got essentially an awful lot of people who really aren't occupied by what they feel they should be doing or something like that. Did you see that?*

HELMAN: I think that's sort of a standard analysis of the Austrian psyche. And of course historically that's understandable. Austria was the center of a polyglot empire that really was quite impressive in both its political structure, and its governance and its success over a considerable period of European history. Culturally that made Vienna an extraordinary capitol. Subsequently I became quite interested in Austrian, particularly Viennese, culture. Extremely rich, extremely productive, and contributed a great deal in terms of art, music, science, philosophy, literature and academics. There also were extraordinary personalities associated with this creativity. I knew where Freud lived, where Beethoven died, where Schubert held home concerts, where Mozart's operas were originally performed. The Nazi takeover promoted a huge brain drain to the United States that greatly enriched our culture and sciences.

*Q: Well, we really came out ahead on the whole expulsion of people.*

HELMAN: I formed a somewhat different and more positive assessment of Austria after the war. They were stuck in a miserable situation in a sense that they had lost the war, had contributed to the Nazi cause and were occupied by the four victorious powers. Austria's leadership adroitly developed the fiction that Austria was Hitler's first victim rather than a willing participant in the Hitler phenomenon, the Nazi phenomenon. Austria's leadership also deserves a lot of credit for developing the long-enduring post-war coalition between the Conservatives and Socialists, thus suppressing the kind of civil conflict that tore Austria apart in the '30s. They deserve a lot of credit for working together to achieve the larger goal of gaining political independence; political independence meaning the end of occupation in 1955. They adroitly manipulated the western powers and the Russians. A good history of this in English really hasn't been written that I know of, and that's too bad.

The two major Austrian political parties developed this so-called "proporz" system under which the two parties divided up governmental ministries and plum jobs on the basis of an elaborate formula and periodic inter-party negotiations. "Proporz" also allowed the leadership to avoid as much as possible the kind of politics of destruction that led to Austria's takeover by the Nazis in the '30s. "Proporz" also had its downside which grew during and after the occupation. Not surprisingly, it turned into a large pork barrel and was used to sustain in power parties and a government that clearly had served their post-

war purposes. But “Proporz” broke down over time and that’s healthy. But it was remarkably well-designed to serve a very important purpose. The labor unions I think were under the control of the Socialists and the latter kept the powerful unions away from the Communists. The labor unions were prepared to go to the streets and the barricades against the Communists - and they did, I believe in 1949. So I think the Austrians deserve a great deal of credit for bringing about their eventual independence and managing their economy. And at the same time they developed a foreign affairs posture whereby they had a special role to play as a bridge between east and west. Austria felt that it has a particular entrée to Eastern Europe, to Hungary, and the rest based upon the heritage of the Austro-Hungarian empire. I think there must’ve been some truth to that, but also overblown.

*Q: Well, I think the peace treaty was in '54, '55. It really came about because the United States realized we don't care. I mean this was not a pivotal point here.*

HELMAN: Yes, but it was not a peace treaty. The treaty’s name, the Austrian State Treaty was carefully insisted upon by the Austrians for that reason. There were lots of reasons for it, but mainly that Austria was Hitler’s victim, not his ally. They weren’t an enemy state. John Foster Dulles spent a lot of time on the Treaty. But one of the reasons why the Treaty and the consequential withdrawal of occupation forces was possible was because, unlike the German occupation, Austrians maintained an Austrian national government throughout Austria. Moreover, unlike the sectorized Berlin, the center of Vienna was collectively patrolled by the four powers. There were no competing Austrian governmental authorities in Austria.

*Q: How about anti-Semitism? Because Austria had a reputation way back of rather virile anti-Semitism; you know the court in front of Joseph and all of that. How did you find that? What was your impression of it at the time?*

HELMAN: Oh, it was there, particularly in rural Austria, where there no longer were Jews. It was never acknowledged but it certainly was there in Vienna. I got to know prominent members of the Jewish community; it was small and of course most of them were remnants of the war years who survived the concentration camps and the like, or returned to Austria from the U.S. or the UK. It was a tight community there, but one that could not hold a candle to the Austrian Jewish community of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with its immense achievements in science, philosophy and the arts. The postwar Jewish community barely had the resources to maintain the educational, religious and social services needed. It had only one synagogue, in the old ghetto. I reached the conclusion that it was hopeless for a Jewish family to think that it could reestablish a comfortable life there. I’ve been proved wrong by what I gather is now a thriving Jewish community that has recovered quite nicely. They were helped, as were other remnant Jewish communities around the world, by the Lubavitcher movement, a quite-remarkable Chasidic group headquartered in Brooklyn, who saw themselves as “missionaries to the Jews.” Quite a remarkable bunch that always managed to establish contact with me no matter where I was posted.

What was disturbing was the Austrian inability to admit to any overt anti-Semitism, though even that is now very recently changing. But they knew it and it was most evident in one extraordinary experience that I and others went through at that time. One of the saving graces of Austria's sometimes perverse culture was the institution of the cabaret in which the performers took the gloves off in lampooning different aspects of Austrian life. *(laughs)* And there was one that was not so much cabaret, it was sort of a one man show and it was put on by an actor - a remarkable fellow by the name of Helmut Qualtinger - and his presentation was titled "Herr Karl." Herr Karl was a lower middle-class Viennese, a typical small "kleinburger" who owned a small deli. This was a lengthy monologue covering Herr Karl's life and experiences during the civil war in the late '20s and '30s between the various political parties and how and why he switched from one party to another, always following the path of least resistance, going along to get along. That's why he ended up cheering for Hitler during the Anschluss and joining the Nazi Party but, of course, not meaning to cause anyone harm. Herr Karl really felt sorry when with others he forced Herr Goldberg to scrub the sidewalk with a toothbrush, and, no hard feelings, he was really happy to see Herr Goldberg when he came back after the war. And he couldn't understand why Herr Goldberg wouldn't say hello. After all, they had been neighbors. The entire monologue, of course, was in Viennese dialect. And what was remarkable about this monologue and extremely telling was how it went deeply into Vienna's anti-Semitic culture fostered in part by the small-mindedness or pettiness of Austrian social political culture. I think it went on for years, this show. Certainly when I was in Vienna it was always sold out. At the close of each performance there was never any applause, just silence. Extraordinary experience. It hit home.

*Q: It sounds like a not-so-funny Archie Bunker of our time.*

HELMAN: Yes, sure.

*Q: In a way, showing the prejudice. It was called "All in the Family," a TV show which ran for a couple years.*

HELMAN: Oh, I remember Archie Bunker, yes. I guess there was some of that but it hit home so hard you couldn't laugh, even though in retrospect if you did that again today you would laugh. If Qualtinger were performing today he would be talking to the children or grandchildren of the people who saw it back in the late '30's and early '40's.

*Q: They wouldn't have the same visceral reaction.*

HELMAN: They might have laughed and applauded, and felt relieved that they could disclaim responsibility. Yes.

*Q: What about the Freiheitliche Party? This was the far right, wasn't it?*

HELMAN: Yes.

*Q: As we're talking at the turn of the twenty-first century, there is a significant, maybe not neo-Nazi, but damn close to a neo-Nazi rightist party in Austria which has a significant political role. Were you seeing that or was this way off on the fringe?*

HELMAN: No, no. It was at that time quite blatantly a party that tried to attract those elements of the Austrian population that felt excluded from, or didn't want to join in, the two principal parties. They were strongest in Carinthia and in some other of the rural areas of Austria. They were also strong enough in Vienna but never amounting to anywhere near their strength today. But what was stunning about going to their meetings, as I did, was the nostalgia of their membership for their various Nazi military units, including the SS. It was never disguised in their meetings. They used to have their uniforms, their battle flags, their caps, and so on. It was quite an experience. *(laughs)* Of course they justified themselves as being simply soldiers doing their duty and all of the rest, but it's hard to take.

*Q: The Edelweiss Division and all of that?*

HELMAN: All the rest of it. They used to have their own battle flags on the stage and it was pretty nasty.

*Q: Did you find that in general when you were dealing with people that there was...because senior officials at that time, and not so senior, would've been involved in the Hitler state. Were they all fighting on the eastern front? Were they sort of making excuses, or not?*

HELMAN: Well, except if you happened to talk to somebody of the Freiheitliche, the average Austrian didn't want to talk. It was very difficult to get them to talk about their experiences during the war. They felt comfortable in the myth that Austria was Hitler's first victim. Although I think the Austrians knew that Hitler was welcomed into Vienna during the Anschluss by huge crowds. It was not a subject that was easily broached or easily served as a subject of conversation at dinner.

*Q: Either as observing, did Kurt Waldheim come across your orbit at all when you went?*

HELMAN: Not at that time. Bruno Kreisky was the principal guy, the Foreign Minister and later Prime Minister. He was Jewish by birth, spent the wartime years in Scandinavia and returned to dominate Austrian politics during the '60s and '70s. He declared himself a non-believer and opted out of the Jewish Community. I got to know Waldheim later when he was Secretary General of the United Nations and, before that, when he was Austria's UN Ambassador.

*Q: Yes, but not at this time. At that time how would you describe American-Austrian relations?*

HELMAN: Austria was a neutral country by necessity. They had to adopt neutrality as

one of the steps necessary to persuade the Russians to agree to the State Treaty, but it was a neutrality that certainly contained a great deal of sympathy, cultural affinity to the West. Financially and economically, in terms of manufactures and exports, it was largely towards markets in Western Europe and the United States or elsewhere.

*Q: Did the Soviet Embassy, the Soviet power, did it intrude much?*

HELMAN: It was big. It was big.

*Q: What were they doing?*

HELMAN: Oh, I think probably doing KGB (Soviet State Security Committee) work as much as anything else. *(laughs)* Vienna at that time, because it was so difficult to move around in Berlin, really was sort of the spy capitol of Europe, or purportedly such. Of course we had a large KGB contingent, as I understood it, to contend with. We were briefed about that in the Political Section. I used to go to Eastern European receptions and kind of enjoyed it because they had their own culture and my wife and I rapidly learned if you wanted anything to eat at these receptions you had to get there on time because the Eastern European diplomats got there right on time and they mobbed that table and swept it clean of food. *(laughs)* And, of course, all Eastern European countries I had embassies in Vienna, but the consequential one was that of the USSR. You know they had this marvelous practice at their receptions of having a reception for the hoi paloi, guys like me and most everybody else, and then a different room with better eats to which those who really counted were invited. *(laughs)*

*Q: Yes, a good classless society type of thing.*

HELMAN: The good classless society. *(laughs)*

The big event though, that led to a lot of time spent with the Soviet Embassy when I was there, was the summit between Khrushchev and John Kennedy.

*Q: This was a very pivotal summit.*

HELMAN: Yes, a very pivotal summit.

*Q: Could you talk about your perceptions of this and what you were doing? Did you get involved?*

HELMAN: Well, I served in a support role.

*Q: Shining shoes or...*

HELMAN: Basically that. If that's what it would've required, I would've shined shoes. I helped around the fringes with the White House staff and the preparations for the summit,



but I didn't get involved in any of the substantive stuff. I had a glimpse of the President, of Mr. Khrushchev, the first lady - Jacqueline Kennedy - and my wife and I were invited to one massive reception for the whole crew, but you couldn't see or talk to anybody there. *(laughs)* But that was about it. And it was only in retrospect that I, as everybody else, got an appreciation for the significance of that particular summit.

*Q: Kennedy came back and Khrushchev had essentially challenged him and things really turned almost nasty after that.*

HELMAN: It was downright dangerous.

*Q: It was damn dangerous, it was. I mean this led to the Cuban missile crisis and all that. Did you all feel a lowering of the temperature? I mean a concern in Vienna about just general East-West relations at that time?*

HELMAN: I can't say that we did at the time. The usual courtesies were observed. No one at that time during the summit acknowledged that these two men had clashed head on. I don't know if anybody suspected what consequences would flow from Khrushchev's mistaken evaluation of Kennedy at that time. My only recollection of it was there was just a grand and glorious event that was widely reported and made Vienna the center of the universe and our embassy in Vienna one of the key sites. But it clearly was a historic event and I was lucky enough to be on its distant fringe.

At that time also the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was in the first years of its existence. It was headquartered in Vienna. It drew attention when I was there when Vyacheslav Molotov was posted for a period of time as the Soviet Union's permanent representative to the IAEA. I got to meet him. I chatted with him several times at receptions. It was just chit-chat but I was well aware of the man's historical significance. He was accompanied by his wife and I believe that it was the first time she was ever allowed to go abroad with him. I was told that until then, even for as committed an underling as Molotov, she was held in Moscow as Stalin's hostage when Molotov traveled. He was accompanied by his wife which in itself was a change from the past. She was Jewish and had been arrested in '48 or '49 in the purge that accompanied Stalin's campaign against Jewish doctors. As I recall, Molotov lasted in Vienna for only a brief period of time, six to eight months. He was sent there during the Khrushchev thaw, when some persons were rehabilitated, and then for some reason his standing at home deteriorated and he was recalled. I can't believe it was because of anything that he did in Vienna. I was just intrigued because of the man's past. I knew where he was departing from - the Russians used to travel by rail through Vienna's Ostbahnhof, the eastern train station. So I thought I'd go out there and watch it because this would very likely be the last time Molotov was in the West. I knew what time the train left. And it was... The older European railroad stations are special places, you know. Great atmosphere. *(laughs)*

*Q: Oh, yes.*

HELMAN: This was very early in the morning and there were all the KGB types in their long green horsehide trench coats. You could tell them on the street because it was like a uniform. I stayed in the background and I just watched. He never emerged again.

*Q: I thought he ended up in the Urals or something, in charge of some power station or something like that.*

*You mentioned that the KGB was all over the place; I assume that the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) was all over the place, too.*

HELMAN: How would you guess? *(laughs)* Charlie Katek was fairly senior I think in the Agency at that time. He was Station Chief.

*Q: As a political officer were you getting anything from the CIA? Was there any particular contact or anything like that, or were they doing their thing and you were doing yours?*

HELMAN: No, we had contact. I'm sure they weren't sharing anything particularly sensitive with me, but we tried to work together particularly when it came to social events and discussions of political events and with political personalities. I knew some of the guys in the Station and I thought it was a reasonably well-managed operation. I mean in terms of a relationship with the Political Section. It was, of course, much larger than the Political Section.

*Q: You mentioned dealing with the Freiheitliche and also the Communist Party, but our antennae were sort of focused obviously on the Communists but also on the Freiheitlichen; are these guys going to come up again or was this just sort of a fringe outfit that you want to keep track of but you weren't really thinking about a resurgence of Nazism or something?*

HELMAN: Well, we were always concerned about the resurgence of Nazism and these guys certainly would have been part of it. But on the national level the danger was minor. On a provincial level, particularly in Carinthia, the Freiheitliche were quite strong and were in a governing role, as they are today. I believe Jorg Heider is or was the Governor of Carinthia.

*Q: Carinthia is which region? Where is that?*

HELMAN: Carinthia is Austria's southernmost province, or state. Klagenfurt is its capitol. I think right wing politics have always been strong down there. Borderlands I find tend to bring out ethnic political extremes. By borderland I mean in the cultural sense, Carinthia representing Germanic culture confronting that of the Slavic world. In contrast, the Communist Party by that time was pretty small and pretty hopeless. They had been thoroughly trashed and beaten down and their efforts, supported and even spearheaded by

the Russian occupiers, to gain electoral power in the eight or ten years after the war, were total failures except in the Russian sector and the leadership of that party was just a bloody disaster. We never really considered the Communist Party a real threat in Austrian politics. After the State Treaty, I recall they lost whatever representation they had in parliament. They were loud, they published a Party newspaper, the Volksstimme, they held rallies, some of them kind of interesting, as a matter of fact, but they were slavish, mimicking and repeating the Soviet line. Utterly predictable and utterly discredited in Austrian politics in general and in particular in the labor unions to which the Communists always looked as a source of hope for strength - but that never eventuated.

*Q: When you were there in '60 to '62 when the Kennedy administration came in, did they designate anybody as a youth officer or did this come a little later?*

HELMAN: I think it came a little later. I probably would've been the logical choice since I was closer to youth than any of my colleagues.

*Q: I mean they were sort of pushing us, I think it was probably a year later - '63ish or later - by the time...*

HELMAN: Well, we were getting close to Kennedy's assassination. Kennedy came in, in '60.

*Q: '61.*

HELMAN: '61, that's right. He was elected in '60. You know I don't recall. The Embassy certainly in a sense fed off of him because he was such an immensely popular figure in Europe and that included Austria. He represented such a fresh, new generation, and one with idealism and style.

*Q: It really touched a chord which really surprised me. You know I'd go into little villages, about a year later I was in Yugoslavia and you'd find little pictures of Kennedy in the marketplace. Tito, and also pictures of Kennedy.*

HELMAN: He was hugely popular. Immensely popular.

*Q: When did you leave in '62?*

HELMAN: I left in September of '62. It was only a two-year tour.

*Q: Just before the missile crisis.*

HELMAN: Yes.

*Q: Where did you go?*

HELMAN: Barbados.

*Q: Oh, boy.*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* Don't ask me why.

*Q: I can see you were obviously on the hardship track. (laughs)*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* You know I had nothing to do with any of those assignments. I was just a loyal servant. They told me to go to Milan, I went to Milan; they told me to go to Vienna, I went to Vienna; they said go to Barbados, I went to Barbados. It was after Barbados when all of a sudden the assignment process became different for me.

*Q: That you had to take note.*

HELMAN: I think you had to develop some insight into how the process functioned. I came to the conclusion that the real assignment process would be less a matter of the Personnel Office working on the basis of some master plan than your "street reputation." After Barbados, all my assignments were the result of someone from a substantive office calling and saying that they have a job open and wanted me.

*Q: Well, I can't tell you how many interviews, particularly when I first started this, of guys who became ambassadors and all were maybe standing at the urinal next to Roy Henderson and they'd say, "Where are you going?" and "Oh, you don't want to go there. I'll get you a better job." I mean things were done that way. (laughs)*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* There was that.

*Q: Well, we'll catch you next time in 1962 when you're off to Barbados.*

*Q: Barbados - you were there from '62 to?*

HELMAN: I was there for six months beginning in the fall of '62.

*Q: You were just there for six months?*

HELMAN: Yes. I was transferred out early because it was discovered that my youngest child, my son, who was born in Vienna, had a congenital muscular deformation in the eye muscles. It required specialized surgery and extended post-operative care which couldn't be handled on Barbados so I asked for a medical transfer which was granted. So I was there only about six months.

*Q: Well, let's just talk about Barbados at this time. Was Barbados independent by this time?*

HELMAN: No, it was a British crown colony as I recall. One of the last. We had a Consulate General there. I recall talk of independence was very much in the air but I think as I recall they were a couple years away from getting independence.

*Q: What were you doing?*

HELMAN: I was doing economic and commercial work and also helped Eileen Donovan, who was the Consul General - and a marvelous lady - on some of the political work. I got involved mostly in political work through my job because labor work sort of fell to the economic and commercial officer and labor activity was very important politically on that island. Errol Barrow, I guess who later became Premier after independence, was a major political figure for years. There also was a fellow by the name of Walcott who was head of the Barbados Trade Union Congress, the principal labor union on the island. Of course Walcott and Barrow played very important roles in the politics of the island. I got to know both men and their associates. Political life on Barbados was pretty active. I enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun.

*Q: Were the unions there sort of on the British model of quite militant and saw things as "them versus us" and all that?*

HELMAN: Nothing in Barbados was really militant, which was one of the charms of the island. They were a well-educated people, high literacy rate; they were reasonably prosperous - I don't mean prosperous in a Western sense, but there wasn't too much poverty on the island. They had the sugar and tourism which were the principal industries on the island. They were doing very well. But it was on the British model and the Barbados Labour Party was closely affiliated with the Workers Congress on Barbados, much like the UK.

*Q: Were the union people open to talking to them and all of that or...*

HELMAN: They couldn't avoid the planters. It was a small island. *(laughs)* There was a planter's community but that was pretty small and the fraction of the population that was white was also I think in the neighborhood of five, six percent, and it was pretty obvious to me they weren't going anywhere beyond the short term. The planters did dominate the island's economy, but not its politics. If you wanted to know what was going on, you really couldn't avoid the labor union people. And they were a lot of fun. I mean they used to hold rallies and they were spellbinding speakers.

*Q: I interviewed some time ago Eileen Donovan and she was saying the social life got to be something because there was sort of a wife at home and the little wife who came to the parties and things like this. But there were a lot of sort of social gatherings and all that. Did you find that?*

HELMAN: That was certainly true and Eileen was a marvelous hostess as well. She did a very good job with representation work. But there was a lot of socializing. Again, it was a

small island. One of the things I found was that after about four or five months you'd already met everybody that was going to be of any particular significance to your job for the next couple of years because you were talking about a handful of people. Your description of Eileen's comments about the social life reminds me that of course there were a lot of Americans on the island; forget about the tourists but there were a lot of Americans who came to the island as a second home. One of those was Marietta Tree, whose husband was Sir Ronald Tree who owned the - I think it was called the Shady Lane Hotel, which was the premier hotel on the island at that time.

*Q: He had theater connections, didn't he?*

HELMAN: Theater, yes. He was in the arts world but he spent a good deal of time in Barbados, at least at that time, and Marietta Tree, of course, comes from - what was the name of the Massachusetts family?

*Q: Saltenstahl or Adams or...*

HELMAN: No. Her brother was I think governor of Massachusetts.

*Q: Lodge?*

HELMAN: No. But she comes from a very well-known, prominent Massachusetts family, I believe Peabody. She was at that time when I met her - this was during the Christmas season of '62, it must've been - one of our ambassadors to the United Nations.

*Q: Yes. A very close friend of Adlai Stevenson.*

HELMAN: A very close friend. Very close indeed, yes. And Sir Ronald was a very tolerant gentleman because he had his own interests. It was a very sophisticated world, particularly for this innocent from Detroit. (*laughs*) Which I was, despite my innocence, learning. So there was that social life, but most of my socializing was spent with the blacks on the island who were in prominent leadership positions and those guys I met were largely in the labour union movement.

*Q: Was there the equivalent of white flight as independence reared its head?*

HELMAN: Not when I was there and I really stopped following it because what happened to Barbados seldom showed up in the New York Times or the Washington Post. At that time I think the white community was pretty conscious that the trend was towards independence with political and eventual economic power in the black community. A lot of the political power was already in the black community. If you went to the parliament in Barbados it was really quite nice - I mean sort of entertaining in the sense that it was, in its procedures and dress and decorum, very similar to the House of Commons - and maybe even more so with the speaker in wigs and robes and all that sort of stuff and the question period and so on. And most of the representatives were black and even then the

ministers of the colony were black, and any election was going to go black.

*Q: You left there and came back to Washington, I take it. This had been in early '63ish, I guess.*

HELMAN: Well, sort of mid '63 I think by the time I actually got settled.

*Q: Going back to Barbados, you would've been there in October of '62 during the Cuban missile crisis.*

HELMAN: No, as a matter of fact I was not. I was on Home Leave then; I was not on Barbados during that time. I think I got down there in November, something like that.

*Q: Well, then in mid '63 you're back to Washington. What was your job?*

HELMAN: It was my introduction to UN political affairs. I got a call from Joe Sisco, who was then either deputy director or director of UN political affairs. I'm not sure how I came to his attention, perhaps through David Wainhouse, but in any event Joe then, and for many years after of course, was a very dynamic figure in the State Department and he decided that my best interests were in UN political affairs. *(laughs)* And so I was assigned there and stayed there until I left for Brussels and U.S. NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in 1968. I was there for a good stretch in UN political affairs.

*Q: Talk to us a little about your impression of Joe Sisco and his method of operation - because he is one of these powerful figures in the State Department bureaucracy. How did you find him?*

HELMAN: In personal terms I liked him very much. He paid attention to me, which of course was very flattering. And I was quite a junior officer at the time; I was an FSO-7 or -6. I was able to work with Elizabeth Brown and Virginia Hartley. Virginia Hartley was a civil servant and long-time participant in UN political affairs. So I had really excellent tutors and they were very close to Joe. I think Elizabeth later became deputy director and subsequently director of UNP. But I also got to meet at that time David Popper who was I think deputy assistant secretary at IO (Bureau of International Organization Affairs), and all of these people really became quite good friends - Joe less so in personal terms, David very much so. With this group, I was very lucky in having smart, very good people paying attention to me and what I could contribute. Joe was remarkable in his ability to anticipate what the boss is going to need almost before the boss knew he needed it. He was extraordinarily adroit in bureaucratic terms and taught me that whoever came up with the draft cable or memo or whatever, could exercise control of how the US acted and what policy it followed. Control of process preceded control of content. Joe made himself invaluable to his bosses. He knew what to do next, controlled the paperwork and never betrayed uncertainty.

*Q: This would be Dean Rusk?*

HELMAN: Well, at that time Joe was either deputy director or director of UNP and then became director and it was only subsequently he became assistant secretary for IO and later for NEA. I think he succeeded Harlan Cleveland. This was in the Jack Kennedy era when of course Dean Rusk was Secretary of State, and we had Harlan Cleveland as assistant secretary for IO. Dave Popper was his deputy. Richard Gardner was one of the other deputies. He was a Professor of Law from Columbia and most recently, under Clinton, he was our Ambassador to Spain, I recall. I got to know Richard Gardner very well; he played a role subsequently in my career, as did David - as did all of these guys. David Popper was the principal deputy assistant secretary.

I now recall how I came to Joe Sisco's attention. When I was in Vienna the Front Office consisted of Doc Matthews who was the consummate professional...

*Q: Oh, yes.*

HELMAN: And David Wainhouse was his deputy. David, a number of years later, died in a tragic auto accident; I think he had a stroke or heart attack while driving the car. But David was very much involved in International Organization affairs during the late '40s and '50s and I think he was deputy assistant secretary of state at one time. At that time of course Dean Rusk was involved in that part of the State Department, in IO. It was, I recall, David Wainhouse who urged me to consider UN affairs as a possible job in the State Department at some point. I think he probably mentioned me to Joe Sisco.

Joe's skills I think came in anticipating the needs of his bosses I think before the bosses may have realized that they had any. And he was there first with the most and the best; he was tireless; he was very aggressive; he had an instinct for assembling power and authority, and in those days and for years subsequent to that and even today, when you had a large international crisis there was always a UN element to it. IO/UNP, at that time, and for many years thereafter, was staffed by highly capable Foreign Service officers. Joe, to the consternation of a lot of the regional bureaus, when there was a crisis that involved the UN and UN political activity Joe dominated the bureaucratic process. For example, he was the Department's point man on the Congo crisis. Even before he became NEA's Assistant Secretary, Joe was a central player in the Middle East policy process. By the way, Joe used to delight putting FSOs through the wringer, taking advantage of their inexperience and even disdain for the bureaucratic process. I learned from that.

*Q: It's really interesting how somebody really doing their homework and knowing what they're about understands the bureaucratic structure. You said it's a very competent staff and certainly I've worked with Elizabeth Brown in Athens - she was a political counselor there and obviously a very capable person - how did you find UN affairs ranked within the State Department pecking order? Did you find that the geographic bureaus sort of...I mean you were the skunk at the banquet or something like this? Did they avoid you? I'm just curious the feeling about this.*



HELMAN: I think on a bureaucratic level they felt that we were interlopers and insisted on playing a more significant role in the development of policies than the regional bureaus thought wise. The regional bureaus often hurt themselves in this kind of competition because they tended to discount the significance of the UN and the Security Council, and too few of the officers in regional bureaus paid any attention to the political dynamics of the UN and how one conducts diplomacy there. So when the center of international focus for a particular issue lodged in the United Nations, and in the Security Council, our regional bureaus, I think through their own lack of interest and skills, were inept or often uninformed about how one went about achieving US objectives. I think it amounted to a professional deformation on the part of FSO's. Besides, IO jealously protect access to USUN. Any instruction through New York had to be signed by IO, that is, Joe Sisco.

*Q: UNP means United Nations Political Affairs.*

HELMAN: Political Affairs, yes. That's the one that Joe Sisco headed. UNP in particular was a very active place and was also able to attract quality Foreign Service Officers on rotation from the regional bureaus to work there. For example, Steve Campbell, an old near eastern hand, and a very bright guy. He was subsequently Consul General in Jerusalem. Steve worked in UNP while I was there on Arab Israeli issues. He provided UNP with very qualified regional expertise. And of course so much of Middle Eastern and Arab-Israeli problems were lodged - the theater in which that was played out was frequently the UN. Whether it was dealing with the Arabs who saw the UN as a forum of great advantage to them, or the Israelis who were resistant to it and were dragged in kicking and screaming, and were always at a disadvantage. Think of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 negotiated by Arthur Goldberg in the aftermath of the Six Day war. They remain the keystones of any eventual settlement in the Arab-Israeli situation.

*Q: Was Zionism as racism raised during your time?*

HELMAN: That didn't come up until the Daniel Moynihan era in the Nixon years. The Arab countries hadn't thought of that one as yet but they got around to it eventually.

I'll give you an example of how I think the regional bureaus, to their disadvantage, resisted developing the expertise necessary to function in the UN environment. One of the good practices that had developed in the State Department over the years was that during a General Assembly session, which typically ran from early September to the week before Christmas, each regional bureau would send a regional liaison officer to New York on TDY (Temporary Duty) to work with the Ambassador, with the political staff, in managing our interests during the course of that General Assembly and during the course of any Security Council activities that might come up. It also provided outstanding opportunities to establish professional contacts. Almost all countries assign their "high flyers" to their UN missions.

Typically the regional bureau sent somebody who was in between assignments or, I

shouldn't say "discards," but the guys who weren't going anywhere within the bureau.

*Q: In personnel we used to call it "training officers." These were officers when they came around and said, "You have to send somebody to be trained," these were the officers who were let-go-able.*

HELMAN: Yes, exactly.

*Q: I mean nothing wrong with them but they weren't indispensable.*

HELMAN: They weren't indispensable and they weren't potential live wires in the bureau. That's right. And so they sent people up there and then they sent them off to some posting, perhaps a nice posting, but that person's newly acquired skills and contacts were useless to the bureau and the State Department. I think the bureaus later learned - figured out what was happening. And of course Joe, who I guess eventually became a Foreign Service officer, never served a day posted overseas.

*Q: No, I can remember the jowls that quivered in the corridors of the State Department about this rank. It didn't bother me particularly; there was a great to-do when he became...he's not really a Foreign Service officer. It was exciting. It was jowl quivering time.*

HELMAN: Well, he wasn't an FSO but he knew the political game, the bureaucratic game. And of course since he was so long in the State Department, had so much continuity and was able to command the confidence of the senior officers he made himself indispensable to successive secretaries of state.

*Q: And particularly when he moved up to Middle Eastern Affairs.*

HELMAN: Middle Eastern Affairs and later Under Secretary for Political Affairs and all of that.

*Q: You know, he's a great figure.*

HELMAN: Joe never rested. *(laughs)* You went on vacation, he didn't. He ate your lunch. *(laughs)*

*Q: Somebody once described Joe Sisco; he said there used to be an advertisement that was held for IBM (International Business Machines) and they would have on the wall just the word "think" and then a New Yorker put one up that said "scheme" instead of "think" and they said, "You know that's Joe Sisco." This is one point of view.*

HELMAN: That's right, but he could think as well as scheme. I absolutely got along very well with the guy and he did a great deal for me. He gave me good work, given I was quite a junior officer at that time. My efficiency reports obviously were very good; he had

no reservations about having me work directly with the Assistant Secretary on various issues. He trusted me that far which was, for a junior officer, very flattering and very encouraging. I can recall, for example, during the crisis in the Dominican Republic when poor Tap Bennett was shelled in his Embassy. In any event that ended up both in the OAS (Organization of American States), and subsequently in the Security Council, and Harlan Cleveland sort of became the “action officer” on the issue and I helped him. So I got to know the assistant secretary and worked closely with him and with his deputy, Dave Popper. Again, my relationship with Joe, my relationship with Dave Popper, with Dick Gardner, with Harlan Cleveland, continued after they left, and after I was transferred we continued to correspond. Harlan left government with Nixon’s election, I guess he was out in Hawaii for a while with the East-West Center and subsequently was head of the Maxwell School at Syracuse University; I think he set up the Maxwell School.

*Q: He did. He did Maxwell and I’m not sure when Hawaii came. I’ve interviewed him.*

HELMAN: It came before Maxwell. I think he was one of the first out there in the East-West center. In any event they were my role models or mentors or whatever it’s fashionable to call them, but also friends. They were good people, they took an interest in me and they helped me a great deal. And that continued, which was very flattering.

*Q: Well, let’s go to the system. When you were there in ’63 was Adlai Stevenson still the ambassador?*

HELMAN: He was still the ambassador in New York.

*Q: And then he died.*

HELMAN: He died. He had a heart attack or a stroke while in London, I recall. I understand Marietta Tree was with him. Who followed Stevenson? Oh, my goodness. Could it have been Yost? Francis Plimpton was Stevenson’s Deputy for a while but I think Charlie Yost replaced Plimpton as Acting.

*Q: I was wondering, how did you find relations between the IO and the UN mission? Because this is quite different than the normal...technically it was like a geographic bureau, but being close and I mean there was a much closer relationship between them.*

HELMAN: It was a close relationship. It was a competitive relationship and one of the reasons for the competition was that I think, beginning with Adlai Stevenson or perhaps it was Lodge before him, our ambassador to the United Nations was a member of the President’s Cabinet and, as a matter of fact, I think in the rank order of the cabinet, came just after the secretary of state. He was a very senior member of the cabinet, and particularly someone like Adlai Stevenson who had his own political clout and name recognition around the country, that resulted in sometimes a comfortable, sometimes an uncomfortable, relationship with the secretary of state. It was a source of competition and one of the sources of IO’s bureaucratic power derived from its role as a gatekeeper to a

powerful member of the Cabinet. Before an instruction went out to Moscow you had to go through the European Bureau (EUR); you couldn't send it out yourself, it was sent out by the European Bureau. The same thing with IO; if you were going to send an instruction to USUN (United States Mission to the United Nations, New York), the sign-off authority was typically Joe Sisco and it was awfully tough to get around him, or Harlan Cleveland, depending upon the importance of it. And certainly you couldn't do it without Joe's clearance.

Joe's strength was that he was extremely skillful, particularly when he became assistant secretary, in mediating between a high-flying ambassador in New York who was a member of the cabinet and the secretary of state who figured he was in charge of foreign affairs. And when so much of foreign affairs was conducted in the New York forum, the chances for misunderstanding, conflict, jealousies, bad feeling, lack of cooperation, were tremendous and Joe did a very skillful job in managing that relationship. And I think I've learned a lot from Joe on that.

On the working level, on tactical issues, when I was in UNP we were on good terms with the political counselors, principal deputies, or someone handling Middle Eastern issues or someone handling an African issue or something like that. When someone in New York in our Political Section required some immediate guidance, whether a particular phraseology in a pending resolution made sense or not, or whether they were heading in the right direction, they got better attention and better service by let's say coming to me and then I would go to the regional bureau, than if they tried calling the particular desk officer directly. I don't know why that was except I think that one reason that people in New York, particularly on a working level, relied so heavily on UNP was they were intimidated by Joe, but also got good service from UNP. *(laughs)* Which of course gave UNP a good deal of bureaucratic leverage.

*Q: Yes. In other words when you went to the Near Eastern Bureau to get somebody to sign off, you had Joe Sisco behind you. If somebody from the UN, he's just a son-of-a-bitch from out of town going to the desk sort of sight unseen and didn't have quite the same...*

HELMAN: Well, except that we managed the process for USUN on sort of sub-critical political issues where an ambassador or his deputy weren't going to be involved. They came to us. I think here was the intimidation factor; no one wanted to cross Joe; to the extent that they knew I worked for Joe and had Joe's ear, they worked with me. And of course I did give them good service; I mean I learned to work very hard - you know, twelve-, fourteen- hour days. I didn't have a Thanksgiving off in five years. I barely had a Christmas off. So the number of hours put in, particularly when the General Assembly was in session or when there was some critical issue in the Security Council, were extraordinary. You had to be young.

*Q: Did you go up there and all to sort of sub or to get a flavor for the dynamics?*

HELMAN: Yes, but not very often and I think that was too bad. I could have learned a good deal more had I spent a bit more time in New York with our Mission. In part it was, I suppose, a shortage of travel money - the usual excuse. But it could also be that I was more valuable as I became experienced in Washington. In New York I would've been tagging along behind one of the regular political officers at the USUN, whereas in Washington at the State Department I was the officer directly handling particular issues.

*Q: Well, let's talk about some of the issues now in the '63 to '68 period. This is the Johnson period mainly during this time. One thinks of the Dominican Republic and obviously Vietnam.*

HELMAN: The Congo was very big, particularly the peacekeeping operation there. The Congo and the Middle East, were the political issues that occupied a great deal of the time of the United Nations.

*Q: Well, let's take the Dominican Republic first. In the first place could you just, for somebody who isn't familiar, give a brief summary of what the Dominican problem was?*

HELMAN: It was internal unrest. I can't recall all the specifics but there was a good deal of internal unrest that led to Johnson sending in the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne to straighten things out.

*Q: I think it was the 82<sup>nd</sup>, but...*

HELMAN: The 82<sup>nd</sup>? Well, I'm sure you're right.

*Q: The 82<sup>nd</sup> was sort of used for that sort of thing. The 101<sup>st</sup> went to Vietnam.*

HELMAN: They did a good job down there.

*Q: If I recall, the concern was that we were always looking over our shoulders and we didn't want another Cuba.*

HELMAN: Didn't want another Cuba, didn't want a lot of radicals down there. It was in the aftermath of Trujillo. The Dominican Republicans tried to find its own way and politicians were competing down there. In any event there was a good deal of unrest and we sent in troops to quiet things down.

It was an issue that was then taken up in the OAS. We wanted the support of the OAS countries, and I think it was probably - I forget who it was, probably the Russians - wanted to preempt the OAS, to take it into the Security Council. And our position in the UN was that, under the UN Charter, regional threats to the peace should normally and preferably be dealt with in the appropriate regional organization. The Security Council serves as a forum of last resort. So our argument in the security council was that the OAS was properly seized of the issue, was working on it, and was competent. The Security

Council should take no action until it sees whether the OAS can manage it. And that's the way it worked out. We also undertook a diplomatic campaign to gain the support of other OAS members and also with those Africans who considered it important to enhance the status and authority of the OAU. We succeeded in what we set out to do.

*Q: Well, I would think you would always - well, anytime - anytime we did anything, those who belonged to the United Nations who wanted to beat up on the United States for interfering in other people's affairs. There must've been a rather strong cadre of countries that...*

HELMAN: Yes, of course at that time, and for years after, we didn't really like anybody else mucking in hemispheric affairs. It was the Monroe Doctrine, if you will. Traditional American attitude. And we felt, and properly so, that the problem was manageable; we didn't want another Cuba. Although whether there was a real threat or not, I don't recall. But the OAS was involved. We were on the ground and we felt the thing was manageable and I think there was a rather modest loss of life. The Soviets and others were opportunists trying to push it into the Security Council, but they failed.

*Q: What was going on in the Congo?*

HELMAN: The Congo was what's still going on in the Congo as a matter of fact; there is a continuum of terrible unrest. The Belgians of course in '61, '62, granted or forced independence onto the Congo. There was a lot of internal unrest. There was a lot of regional tribal conflict. Patrice Lumumba emerged as a leader who was later assassinated. There were Belgians who never really wanted to let go. Certainly they wanted to continue their control of the country's mining economy, particularly of the Katanga province. The Congo and its resources were important to the Belgian economy, indeed to the European economy. I mean the history of the Congo is just dismal. There have been some good books written on King Leopold's pretensions down there.

*Q: Yes, Leopold's Ghost I think it's called. It's one of them. There are other ones.*

HELMAN: If you go to the Congo-African Museum outside of Brussels, you will find one of the most extraordinary collections of African art, all out of the Congo.

You had Moise Tshombe down there in Katanga sitting on top of huge mining resources, and continuing civil war and civil unrest. Much of the same is being repeated today. And of course there was an element of the Cold War there, the competition. The United States, for a variety of reasons, felt constrained to give Belgium a lot of support. The Congo was taken to the Security Council in the early '60s, as I recall and the UN's response constituted its first large-scale foray into peacekeeping and even nation building. In some ways, the UN was the Congo's government during much of the '60s. I don't know if there are any good histories of the UN's role; I think probably Brian Urquhart must've written something somewhere along the line. But Brian was the Undersecretary General of the United Nations for political and peacekeeping matters - I forget the exact title. The

Secretary General was Dag Hammarskjold, who played a central role in organizing the Congo operation and, through his interpretation of his overall responsibilities under the UN Charter, vastly expanded the role of the Secretary General.

*Q: Dag Hammarskjold.*

HELMAN: Yes, Dag Hammarskjold. And Brian was the successor to Ralph Bunche. I learned year later through my association with Brian that Harry Truman once offered Ralph Bunche the job of Secretary of State, I assume to replace Dean Acheson. Brian and Ralph Bunche were very close and Urquhart later wrote an excellent biography, maybe one of the few but certainly the best extant biography, of Ralph Bunche. Extraordinary man and he was once head of UN political affairs. I'll digress...it was a remarkable feeling when I became, subsequently in the '60s, director of UN political affairs; the desk I had was Ralph Bunche's old desk. He held that job during the '40s. *(laughs)* It was quite impressive.

In any event the desperate needs of the Congo stimulated the growth of UN peacekeeping as an evolving international institution and the U.S. took a major interest in the process and encouraged and in some respects controlled the process. Peacekeeping in the UN has taken many forms, some of it quite passive as at that time in the Middle East where the UN peacekeepers were largely observers - sort of tripwires. In the Congo they sought to take a much more active role; it was a fairly large peacekeeping contingent there that in the end was really I think overwhelmed by the sheer size of the job and the country. It was under the command of Indar Rikye, a senior Indian General. India had contributed a large contingent to the operation. Indar was a fine commander - trained at Sandhurst, I believe - and I got to know him quite well in later years. But the country and the job were too big.

*Q: He really seemed to be in the hands of the Belgian industrialists, wasn't he?*

HELMAN: Belgian industrialists, yes, but I certainly don't have the entire picture. I was one of the officers in the State Department who had to deal with the issue, at least the UN aspects of it which were prominent in part because the secretary general played such a large role. The U.S. saw the UN route is as one way of itself avoiding deeper involvement and therefore risking problems in NATO with the Belgians and with I think other European governments. It was a stinker of an issue. I became most actively involved during the Stanleyville affair; you many recall that...

*Q: This was when the Lumumbists came in?*

HELMAN: The Lumumbists came in and they got hold of a bunch of Belgian hostages and I recall Americans were made captive, as well.

*Q: Mike Hoyt was...*

HELMAN: That's right. He was our consul in Stanleyville.

*Q: He was our consul there, yes. We have an interview with him. He said eating the American flag, which he was forced to do, was not very tasty. (laughs) It was very scary.*

HELMAN: It was pretty bad. I handled the clean part on the State side. I helped put together the rescue operation in which consisted largely of Belgian paratroopers. The U.S. provided transport. They had an airdrop and it succeeded. It was accompanied by a rather humorous incident in State. There was then also an Operations Center in the Department, primitive by comparison to what we have now, more in the nature of a Situation Room. Senior types would gather there to discuss or to await events. The Stanleyville drop was to be at dawn, so they met about midnight. The task force, but it was up on the Seventh Floor and I think it was in that part of the Seventh Floor which subsequently became the Operations Center. I forget when the Operations Center became a real institution. But we were awaiting news of the airdrop and landing of the Belgian paratroops, and so on and so forth, and I was there sort of passing out papers and answering questions. Dean Rusk was there and Joe Sisco - the ever-present Joe Sisco (*laughs*) - and a bunch of others. The Secretary and others had come from some formal affair and were in black tie. Soapie Williams, who was then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs walks in a bit late wearing a business suit. Soapie looks around and says, I think seriously, "I didn't realize you had to dress for this." (*laughs*) Soapie was not always with it. And of course Joe used to run circles around him bureaucratically. That was humorous.

The event was obviously a very serious one. Fortunately the parachute drop was successful and resulted in the rescue. But the Congo turned out to be an impossible problem and even when Mobutu took over and managed to manage the place through his own form of more benign tyranny, he supported U.S. objectives there and salted away a lot of money in doing so. So much for our record of nationbuilding.

*Q: Talking about the Congo, did you get a feeling from your position that the CIA was playing quite a role there?*

HELMAN: Yes, but I was too junior I think to be read into that. But you picked that up around the fringes, sure. Subsequently years later when I got to know Bob Oakley quite well - he was our ambassador down there and there were a number of issues that we had to work on together - I became a little more acquainted with the CIA role.

*Q: Stick to the Congo for the time being. Was the Soviet bear kind of...was this something we were keeping an eye on? Were they playing a spoilers game or how did we feel about it from a UN perspective?*

HELMAN: Sort of a spoilers game although this to be said, they allowed those peacekeeping operations to go forward and even though they didn't participate, they didn't contribute, they did not seek to harass the implementation of the peacekeeping forces the way they subsequently did during the '60s and the early part of the '70s. And we certainly always had an eye out for the Soviet problem down there, but the Soviets, I think didn't become a real competitor in Africa until the '70s, in my recollection.



*Q: One of the things that every embassy gets involved in is the annual list of issues that we want to have every government support us on and all of that. How did you view these embassies going to their particular country and you know we'd send out this list saying, "Be sure to get backing for our interests on such and such a vote," and there would be maybe forty or fifty issues. How did we view this as an exercise?*

HELMAN: I think largely as an exercise at the beginning of a General Assembly session. It was an effort to brief each government and also individual posts on what is going to be taken up. This is what is important, go and talk to your guys about that. To me, everybody participated; it's just one of those things that you did and one never really evaluated, at least at that time, whether it was effective or not. I grew to see that as much an educational device for our embassies as it was for the foreign government. It's good to have the foreign government aware of these issues but so many, particularly with the smaller governments, gave so much authority to their ambassador in New York that most of the decisions were made by their ambassador in New York and not by the home office.

*Q: And usually would vote with a block.*

HELMAN: Vote as a block. I think our feeling always was it educated also the embassies so that on those few occasions when you really did need to apply pressure, the embassy at least had a working knowledge of what the issue was about and could sometimes anticipate our needs and act on its own. It sometimes seemed a pain in the neck but it did serve a real purpose.

*Q: Well, I see your point but it would mean that the ambassador, political officer, at an embassy would have a heads-up at saying, you know this issue might come up and they might see signs of this developing on something and they might be able to nip it in the bud or to influence it, where if they didn't know and all of a sudden it appeared full-blown it would've been too late.*

HELMAN: That's right. So I think it was generally useful. Could we have done with a different product? Probably. Could we have slimmed it down a bit? Probably. Would U.S. foreign policy have fallen apart had we not sent all these out? Probably not. But it was one building block of our overall diplomacy.

*Q: One of the people I interviewed was Ed Peck who was our charge in Iraq, who was told, "Your number two priority after protecting American interests is to gain Iraqi support of our resolution [such and such] on Israel." I mean this was sent to every embassy.*

HELMAN: Hey, that's the one thing I want to do. Piece of cake. *(laughs)*

*Q: (laughs) Another one said, "You know I went to the government of Chad and said, 'Yes I'll support your demarche on protecting whales. Could you please tell me what a*

*whale is?''*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* I think later on when I was in a position of more authority on UN affairs during the '60s, I tried to tailor those a little more sharply to what is of interest to the particular government and what was possible on the part of the embassies. But by and large it became an exercise sometimes useful, sometimes not; but at worse, annoying. In the case of Ed Peck in Iraq, I'm sure he handled it very adroitly.

Let me mention another subject. One event in my career during that period of time was my participation in the negotiation of the Outer-Space Treaty. That's when, under Lyndon Johnson, Arthur Goldberg became our perm rep; he was on the Supreme Court before that, you may recall. Speaking of competition or friction between a secretary of state and a UN ambassador...

*Q: Yes. Those were two very powerful figures. Very powerful.*

HELMAN: That was a classic. Arthur Goldberg barely took instructions from the president of the United States, much less the secretary of state. *(laughs)* He was a powerhouse.

The history of the UN's role in outer-space goes back quite a number of years and I think was fairly impressive in terms setting some of the basic ground rules for the use of space. It developed a number of principles for activities in outer-space, on uses of outer-space, on who owns or doesn't own outer-space, and had arms control elements to it as well. This evolved into a decision on the part of the UN Outer-Space Committee to try and develop all of this in the form of a big multilateral treaty. This was in '66 or '67, in the heat of the Vietnam War when our relations with the Soviets were really bad. The story that I heard was that Lyndon Johnson wanted very much to find some way of demonstrating that we in fact could work with the Soviet Union on some issues of significance, and on arms control issues as well, and the Outer-Space Treaty became the vehicle for that. I was, for reasons I'm not sure I can recall, always interested in outer-space so if there was any outer-space issues in IO, I managed to get involved. So I became a member of Arthur Goldberg's delegation to a conference held in Geneva - that was my first trip to Geneva - back in the mid-'60s, to try and complete negotiations on an Outer-Space Treaty.

Arthur Goldberg was there and Len Meeker, who was the Department's Legal Advisor at the time, was a member of our delegation, and a number of others. I was a political officer for the delegation and that was my introduction to Geneva and the old League of Nations buildings there. That was a great learning experience. A fellow by the name of Morozov, who was Goldberg's Russian counterpart there, later became a member of the International Court of Justice. Kurt Waldheim was chairman of the Outer-Space Committee at that time and so he was very prominent in the negotiations. And eventually we brought home a treaty. My own view is that that was a landmark treaty, not only because it succeeded - we got a treaty - and not only did it contain significant arms

control elements which had an impact many years subsequently on the whole Star Wars missile defense controversy because there are limitations on what we can do militarily in outer-space, but...

*Q: Explosions up in the air and that sort of thing.*

HELMAN: Yes, and placing nuclear weapons in orbit in space. But also it had, as I discovered after I left the State Department and became involved in satellite communications, it had I think profound implications for the commercial development of outer-space - because it mandated that outer-space did not belong to anyone. You can't claim sovereignty over space as a whole or any slice of it just as countries are limited in claims to the ocean. It was general but clear that you had no claim of sovereignty in outer-space, and commercial activity followed in its wake. The commercial impact was not something we anticipated at the time; it was not an expected consequence, but it proved to be very important to the future of global communications, including by the military.

*Q: How did you find the Soviets on this treaty's negotiations?*

HELMAN: Very concerned that they play an equal role. Generally, I think trying to arrive at roughly comparable arms control conclusions, in the sense that in the end they didn't want to preclude military activities in outer-space so much as limit the uses of outer-space for what they considered to be "offensive" military activity. This did not cover, by the way, ballistic missiles with nuclear weapons transiting outer-space; they would be in a ballistic trajectory and not in orbit.

The Soviets were strong supporters, together with developing countries, of some of the vague generalities that are contained in the Outer-Space Treaty, for example that outer-space is to be used for the benefit of all mankind, whatever the hell that meant. We were reluctant to accept that kind of language because we didn't know what it meant and it could obviously be interpreted in ways that would require us to share our achievements in outer-space with lots of people who contributed nothing and said, "Hey, I'm mankind. Give me some." It was one of these nice-sounding phrases that had vague implications for the future. And that phraseology, fortunately or unfortunately, crept into subsequent international multilateral agreements. For example, in the uses of the ocean bed in the Law of the Sea Treaty, that in some respects was modeled on the Outer-Space Treaty. The Outer-Space Treaty, by the way, was modeled in part on the Antarctica Treaty which had legal concepts that were picked up and expanded upon in the Outer-Space Treaty. It's interesting that as our space program evolved we increasingly shared its product with the rest of the world. The best example perhaps is the Global Positioning System of satellites, which is a critically important military system. But the commercial form of the GPS product has been of immense importance to many sectors of the global economy.

*Q: While you were doing this, from your perspective were commercial uses - something like satellites - was this a glimmer? Was this something you were thinking, well, probably eventually we're going to be doing this?*

HELMAN: No.

*Q: This just wasn't in the crystal ball?*

HELMAN: No. This is when we were preparing for the moon landing and it just seemed an exciting thing to be doing. My educational background in law and science was quite appropriate. Besides that no one was occupying the space in the State Department, so I moved in. *(laughs)* That's the Joe Sisco tutorial. *(laughs)*

*Q: How about Vietnam - how did that play from your perspective?*

HELMAN: Very little in my experience, in part because our position on Vietnam in the United Nations was at all costs to keep it out.

*Q: How about the Middle East - what were we doing UN-wise?*

HELMAN: Lots of things, in part because the Arabs chose to make the UN the principal forum for their diplomacy. You didn't have any discussions between Israel and any of the Arab governments at that time. The United States was then, as it is today, probably the only viable broker between the contending sides. But we weren't talking to the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), and at that time Arafat was an enigma to everybody, certainly to us. We had no relations with the PLO. The Arabs and other countries as well chose to make the United Nations the forum for a lot of their anti-Israel politics. So, necessarily, UNP got very much involved as did the Middle Eastern Bureau.

I did not do much work myself at that time on Middle Eastern Affairs. We had Bob Peck who did a lot of the work, and Steve Campbell; Steve Campbell first, Bob Peck subsequently, and a number of very good other fellows who had Middle Eastern experience, and of course Joe Sisco himself played an awfully major role in the whole thing and dominated the discussion of the issues within the State Department, and later became assistant secretary for Middle Eastern affairs. Of course then all initiative shifted to the Middle Eastern Bureau, but I was gone by then. *(laughs)*

*Q: That brings up a question. I'll come back to the Middle East, but was there the National Security Council, and was this much of a factor in anything we were doing in those days?*

HELMAN: I don't think I understand the question.

*Q: In other words, I think George Bundy was national security adviser, but later the National Security Council developed, particularly under Kissinger, a power unto itself. But I was wondering whether, under Johnson, were you saying, "Hey we better check this out with the National Security Council," or anything like that? I mean was this something you would kind of practice?*

HELMAN: I was not all that much involved on Middle Eastern issues.

*Q: But on other issues too.*

HELMAN: On other issues I don't recall that we sought much guidance from the NSC..

*Q: So it wasn't another power center particularly?*

HELMAN: No, it was not another power center compared to today. I suspect that the NSC was largely preoccupied with Vietnam. Above the bureau level the power centers were the secretary of state or our UN ambassador, or both at the same time. In those years, particularly, Arthur Goldberg would insist upon communicating directly with the president when he wanted to, and he did. The service we tried to perform for Dean Rusk was to try and find out what in the world Arthur Goldberg was saying on some of these issues (*laughs*) and keep the secretary of state informed. From his earlier career, you recall that Rusk was well-versed in UN affairs, a subject that he followed pretty closely after retiring and assuming teaching responsibilities at the University of Georgia, I believe. Years later he used to call me to update him on some current UN issues. You remember in the aftermath of the '67 war there were intensive negotiations in the Security Council to define some sort of peace process. Those efforts resulted in Resolutions 242 and 338 which remain fundamental even today. Goldberg was the point man in those negotiations and instrumental in putting together that language. I'm sure he was in constant contact with the President for guidance.

*Q: You were there during the '67 war when it developed and in a way it was in part instigated by a UN action of withdrawing the buffer troops.*

HELMAN: Yes. U Thant ordered the withdrawal of UN observers because he was required to do so by Nasser

*Q: But as I recall, there was at least a lot of criticism saying at least he didn't stall or something and by doing it in a hurry he ensured that the Israelis would say, huh, and make a pre-emptive strike. That early dealing with U Thant and the withdrawal, did that bring any repercussions?*

HELMAN: I recall it but I wasn't involved in any of the repercussions. My recollection is that U Thant didn't have much choice in the matter even though I agree it would have probably helped - who knows - had he tried to hang in there for a day or two longer.

*Q: Forestalled.*

HELMAN: But remember in UN peacekeeping operations, the secretary general, has borrowed those troops from national governments, and they operate under a specific mandate. They were not combat troops and were not equipped to deter a serious military

force. The Egyptians were intent on moving their army to the Israeli border and perhaps beyond. The Israelis were just waiting for a pretext to slam them. The rest is history. Neither side at that stage would have been deterred by a UN presence and the Secretary General could not risk the lives of his peacekeepers. So, U Thant, to give him the benefit of the doubt, probably felt that he had no choice. There was a limited mandate and if one of the two parties, Israel or Egypt, said get out of my way, he had no choice but to withdraw. It would've been good had he been able to stall a little, but I'm not sure it would've made any difference even in the very short run.

*Q: The resolutions that came about after the Israelis had essentially won the war and taken over the West Bank and Gaza...*

HELMAN: It was huge. It was a huge victory.

*Q: On the UN side, and your side, this must've had a real impact because this whole section of the world had really changed.*

HELMAN: It changed. From my limited point of view it put an end to the hope or pretensions of the Arab world that somehow Israel could be done away with. It was an extraordinary victory and it was what created modern Israel and some of the problems we have today in the Middle East. But it assured, I think more than anything else, the survival of Israel as a state in the Middle East because the Arabs at that point realized that there was no way, through military action, they could obliterate - which I think really was their objective at that time - Israel as a political entity. So that had a profound effect and it certainly enhanced our political role in the Middle East because it became clear that the only interlocutor the Arab world had with Israel was the U.S. They could talk to us and we could talk to Israel. They sought to develop a counterweight in the Soviet Union - and the Soviet Union was a willing participant - as a major factor in the Middle East. It was of some, though limited, utility. Soviet arms proved to be inferior. In 1967 once the Israelis got revved up, they just... That's one for the books, that battle.

*Q: It wasn't really American arms at that time; American arms came later.*

HELMAN: There were some American arms as I recall.

*Q: I think French aircraft.*

HELMAN: French aircraft, some indigenous weapons systems developed by the Israelis. But it was the training of the Air Force and the precision and aggressiveness of the troops - their taking of the Golan Heights, their taking of Old Jerusalem, the blitzkrieg in the Sinai. This was quite amazing. And that world changed after that. There was no going back. But it took Sadat to recognize that.

*Q: Were you involved on Resolution 242?*

HELMAN: No I was not. I was an informed bystander because I was physically in UNP, but it was something that was negotiated basically at the presidential level. Joe Sisco was the desk officer and it took all of his considerable skill stay in the loop.

*Q: What was the feeling towards U Thant?*

HELMAN: Mixed bag.

*Q: He was secretary general at the time.*

HELMAN: He was secretary general at the time. I think a man not terribly well-understood by the United States. He probably wasn't as stern an administrator as we would've liked, but we've always complained about the administration of the UN. A willing servant of the security council, U Thant was a reasonably good diplomat in terms of trying to find accommodations between various sides in high-stakes political activity such as the '67 war. But too often his passivity resulted in U Thant being largely a bystander. That's my recollection. I should say Dag Hammarskjold would never have been a bystander. He would have been in the thick of things, trying to manage the crisis.

*Q: When you think about it, having a Burmese as secretary general, they come from sort of a Buddhist tradition and it's sort of a more passive situation than some of the others. Was there the drumbeat, at that time, of- (end of tape)*

HELMAN: ...really very little; there was some anti-UN sentiment but all the polls, as I recall, at that time, really till today, showed the American public as generally supportive of the United Nations. And there was no active group, as I recall, as there was during the '80s and thereafter, of active anti-UNers. I should add that, recalling U Thant, I think our support for the selection of U Thant was a reaction to the activism of Dag Hammarskjold, who really tried to create very much an independent political power center by expanding the role of the Secretary General under the Charter. Whether that was good or bad, whether he over interpreted the role of the secretary general or not, one can argue, but he was a much more aggressive secretary general than the U.S. felt comfortable with; and at a time when we did not want to see another active secretary general follow Dag Hammarskjold, and where we had to find someone with whom the Soviet Union also felt comfortable, U Thant was a good compromise.

The U.S., down through the years, has always had a conflicted attitude towards the role of the secretary general. An activist secretary general was terrific as long as he did what we wanted. *(laughs)* As soon as he showed a certain instinct for independent initiative, of course we didn't like it at all. And that showed up dramatically during the time of Boutros-Ghali. I think the current secretary general is just a magnificent compromise.

*Q: Kofi Annan, yes.*

HELMAN: Kofi Annan, whom I got to know during my years on UN affairs. He's

activist but he knows how to disguise that sufficiently to comfort the United States and others.

*Q: Was there concern within the IO bureau or Congress and all about the bureaucracy of the UN, particularly UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) and other? Was this much of a theme?*

HELMAN: That was always one of the themes. We were always insistent that the UN avoid duplication, overstaffing and other such wasteful behavior. Other countries appreciated that as the largest single contributor to the organization we were in a sense entitled to a substantial say over how the money was spent. It gave us quite substantial political influence. We played a major role at that time in UN peacekeeping operations, not so much as a direct participant, because at that time one of the unwritten rules of peacekeeping operations was that the permanent members of the security council, which really meant the United States and the Soviet Union, did not directly participate as on-the-ground peacekeepers. But the U.S. would provide most of the logistics, a lot of the equipment - notably out of Quartermaster stocks in Leghorn (Livorno) for the Congo operation - and a lot of the communications. You take a look at the people working with Brian Urquhart of the peacekeeping division of the UN Secretariat - a lot of them were Americans.

There was a lot of quiet cooperation in many respects - and this is something I was conscious of when I was in UNP in the '60s; we played a major role in running those peacekeeping operations where we wanted them, even though we didn't have "boots on the ground." That changed dramatically down through the years. Our concerns for UN efficiency, and the changes in our attitudes towards peacekeeping and the level of our contribution to the United Nations, rose a couple of notches under Ronald Reagan - maybe just a little bit before that. When I was involved in the '60s with UN affairs, the policy of the United States government was that whether we like it or not we have a treaty obligation to pay our dues, and the U.S. pays its dues, pays its bills, particularly when there's a legal obligation to it, and there was never really any challenge to that interpretation of the United Nations Charter. Not until Jeane Kirkpatrick came along in the early '80s.

*Q: How about Congress - were you, in IO, sort of keeping Congress informed? Monitoring? Does somebody keep them informed or were they a player?*

HELMAN: They were always a player by necessity. Congress was also included in our annual delegations to the General Assembly. There were, I recall, two senators and two representatives on each delegation; both parties were represented equally. And I'm sure that there was some consultation with the foreign relations committees of the two Houses. I was not involved with it this time around. I was involved when in '68 I became a Deputy Assistant Secretary. UN issues were of particular interest to certain congressmen; Senator Pell was always a passionate, very strong supporter of the United Nations. Obviously the bureau always paid a lot of attention to Pell because he was sort of their



angel on the Hill (Capitol Hill). Danny Fascell then, but also subsequently when he became chairman of the House Committee on International Relations. in the early '80s followed UN matters closely

*Q: He was a representative from Florida.*

HELMAN: Yes. I think the southernmost district in Florida, as a matter of fact. I got to know him quite well later; he's a really fine man, splendid man - and very supportive. He was a strong supporter of the UN; he understood the issues and so we paid a lot of attention to him.

Ed Derwinsky, who was a Republican congressman from Chicago whom I got to know also subsequently quite well - he was ranking Republican on the House International Relations Committee - and even though his formal position was sometimes a little more hostile, he was a good man. He gave us support.

So there was that kind of thing but I don't recall, or at least I was never involved in, general briefings on specifically UN-related issues.

*Q: But anyway you didn't feel that there were people in the Senate, for example, like today, or has been, Jesse Helms, for a decade or so who was basically hostile so no matter who you were in IO, the Helms factor was around?*

HELMAN: Never. Never had to worry about that, thank goodness. I served two separate tours on UN affairs and we never had to suffer through that kind of harassment. That came in the early '80s. In the early '80s, the administration, I think led by Jeane, abandoned the concept that we owe them money; it was a treaty obligation. She and her associates came up with a different interpretation with which I profoundly disagree and which is still very much the minority view of the international legal community, and is shared by no other country as far as I am aware. Up until that point no congressman challenged the legal validity of our UN assessment. There was no large segment of the American public that cared one way or another, or probably most of them didn't even know we contributed substantial funds. It was largely something that the United States, at the official political level, acknowledged, recognized, undertook, and maintained - and after all it constituted a very modest part of our budget; it was rather a modest line item, even in the '80s, even today. It was only after, in my judgment, we deliberately abandoned - announced our abandonment - of the conclusion that this was a legal, treaty obligation that we were bound to observe that our troubles began. The Reagan Administration denied the obligatory nature of the assessment. Thereafter, it became Katy bar the door in Congress. Whether to meet the assessment, much less how much of it to pay thereafter became a political football. Any Congressman felt free to challenge it, and attach conditions. Why should we give money to the UN when my constituents don't have enough jobs here, or when I need a new road going through my district? It became a political football game and became impossible. I think it was a grave mistake and a grave disservice. Rreform and efficiency in the UN system could have been achieved in other

ways. Because of our importance and the size of our contribution we always have had a huge influence over the organization's operations.

*Q: Were there any other issues that we haven't covered in this particular time from '63 to '68?*

HELMAN: Let's leave it at that. I think the most fun for me was the whole outer-space thing. That kept coming back. I enjoyed it.

*Q: Well, we'll pick this up in 1968. Where did you go?*

HELMAN: I went to USNATO.

*Q: In Brussels?*

HELMAN: Brussels.

*Q: How did your son's eye treatment come out?*

HELMAN: Very well. He was "walleyed;" and one of his eyes started wandering around. They did the surgery and it took about six, eight months of subsequent therapy and it was fine. He doesn't wear glasses today.

*Q: Wonderful.*

*We're going back to 1968 and you're going off to USNATO. What was USNATO?*

HELMAN: It's the United States Mission to NATO. That is the Mission that represents the United States on the North Atlantic Council; it then was headed by a Permanent Representative with the rank of ambassador, and Harlan Cleveland was the ambassador at the time. It was still under Lyndon Johnson. This was in the summer, early fall of '68 when I went over there. I knew Harlan Cleveland, he asked for me for that job in his political section. When I first knew Harlan Cleveland he was Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs while I was in UNP. I'd worked with him and we got along reasonably well. He went to the mission to NATO when it was in Paris and he was the U.S. ambassador who made the trek from Paris to Brussels when de Gaulle decided he didn't want NATO headquarters in Paris anymore. I joined USNATO a few months after it migrated to Brussels, arriving in November, 1968.

*Q: You were in USNATO from '68 to when?*

HELMAN: '68 to '73; it was a long tour. It was a double tour.

*Q: It would be interesting. I mean being the new boy on the block in NATO just after they've made the move. Was there a feeling of resentment against the French? How*

*would you say the attitude was at that particular point?*

HELMAN: I think by the time I got there they had absorbed it as a “fait accompli.” The French relationship to NATO always made them the odd man out because while they participated in the political activities of the North Atlantic Council, they did not participate in the integrated military structure which was at NATO’s heart. There were sidebar arrangements which allowed some coordination in military activity and planning with the French, but generally the military work of NATO was conducted without the French, and France, on the political side, always had its own particular approach to issues and events. Same thing was true when I think NATO was in Paris. I don’t know what it’s like now but it probably has not changed dramatically.

*Q: Were the effects of May and June of '68 in France - these were the months of student rebellion and all of this which eventually had de Gaulle leaving the government. Were these having any particular repercussions? Were the French rethinking or was there any thought that they might reintegrate their armed services?*

HELMAN: Not really. Every now and then there was some discussion of that and some hint that the French in one area or another were willing to cooperate more extensively, but they never made the major decision to reintegrate their military forces and the other 14 NATO countries learned not to expect much change in the French position. The French always had their particular perspective on political issues and it was sometimes difficult to coordinate with France on a political level. I think the major event that had some impact on the France in NATO was not so much, at least as far as I know, the events on the streets of the '68 student rebellions, but the Soviet “pacification” of Czechoslovakia in '68 and the subsequent formulation of the “Brezhnev doctrine.”

*Q: Yes. This was August or September?*

HELMAN: Yes, August or September; it was just about the time I arrived. I jumped right into the middle of it. It was a stunning event as far as NATO was concerned. It triggered a lot of the consultations and discussions and planning that NATO was designed to be the forum for. I wasn’t involved; I was really very much at the beginning of the learning curve. But there were a lot of political discussions going on, and certainly military discussions, and I learned a lot about the process of trying to integrate the political and the military. It was a time of substantial policy trauma for the French. Of course this was a graphic demonstration that the French aim for a roaring détente with the Soviet Union - was hardly matched by the Soviets when the discipline of its bloc was at stake.

*Q: You arrived at a time, looking back on it there must've been sort of a significant change of mindset within NATO. The French having shown that they were vulnerable internally with this student thing, at least, and also, particularly with the Soviets, showing they were not a benign pussycat letting developments happen within the bloc. They weren't going to allow any splintering off in the bloc at that point.*

HELMAN: It's the good old Brezhnev Doctrine.

*Q: In a way did you see almost a revitalization of NATO or something? I mean looking and saying, this is a serious thing, and that.*

HELMAN: It's hard to say. It could be described as resulting in a revitalization but don't forget there was a third, and perhaps most important factor, which led to a lot of perturbations in the Alliance. The United States was in the middle of its own trauma with the Vietnam War, where a lot of U.S. military resources were diverted as far as the Europeans were concerned and diminished the strength of the U.S. as a European land power. It took years for US military strength to recover in Europe in the aftermath of Vietnam. And the United States was going through a very rough electoral period in which you had Richard Nixon running against Hubert Humphrey, if you recall, and the violence in the streets of Chicago during the Democratic political convention, and the sweep of the civil rights movement. It was scary for Europe; the Europeans had no better idea of where all of this was heading than we Americans. It was a time of very substantial trauma all the way around.

*Q: What piece of the NATO pie did you have?*

HELMAN: I was in the Political Section. I joined the Political Section when I first was there; Ed Streater was Political Advisor. I later became deputy political adviser when Larry Eagleburger came over to replace Ed. We dealt with those issues that came before the North Atlantic Council, generally how the alliance responds to political developments such as Czechoslovakia. The Council was the forum in which to coordinate the foreign policy of member states. Internal affairs such as those in the US and France were never on the agenda; but they were certainly lively topics of discussion in the corridor. But there were lots of Council discussions of Eastern Europe and the developments in Czechoslovakia, what NATO member response would be, what programs we would develop subsequently and so on. I'm trying to recall, at that time you had Willi Brandt in Germany and Egon Barr as his "eminence grise." I got to know Barr subsequently fairly well. He was very influential and very smart and arguably the architect of Germany's Ostpolitik.

*Q: Was there concern there about Brandt and the Ostpolitik (Soviet bloc eastern policies), or had that faded after the Czech business?*

HELMAN: No, no, no. This to be said, there was a determination on the part of the Germans to sustain an Ostpolitik and they did sustain it in years to come. There was a fairly substantial discussion within NATO about Ostpolitik. The Germans used the Council to both inform and coordinate Germany's pursuit of that policy. There was an unwillingness to discard the détente concepts which were in fact part of the Ostpolitik. The ideas of a conference on security and cooperation in Europe and MBFR (Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions), these were all themes that were constantly before the Council and were further developed and pressed in the aftermath of Czechoslovakia - in

fact under the Nixon administration which came to power shortly after I joined USNATO.

*Q: Was there any concern within NATO ranks, including within our own mission, about the ascension of Nixon to be president at the time?*

HELMAN: Oh, yes. Some of us in the mission had some reservations about Nixon but we were all Foreign Service officers and we did our jobs, and did them I think reasonably well. In the corridor people would ask about Nixon and Humphrey and so on. You'd chat with them, but certainly not as a formal matter. They knew the U.S. was a democracy; they also understood the U.S. was going through considerable trauma at the time. We had our own riots in the streets, and demonstrations; we had Vietnam on our back. Vietnam,

*Q: Was the weakening of the American military presence discussed?*

HELMAN: In an indirect way, yes. It was in terms of how one met one's commitments to the integrated military structure of NATO to maintain one's strength and readiness and so on. But it was never addressed - in my recollection- in terms of Vietnam. Part of the reason is that the Europeans themselves were always a bit behind in meeting their commitments. Still are. *(laughs)*

*Q: I was going to say.*

HELMAN: I think it's that they were hardly in any position to criticize us. But of course they were worried when we couldn't maintain the level necessary to confront the Russians, should they decide to move militarily, and there was always apprehension in Europe that a weakness in conventional strength would prompt Soviet use of greater military pressure on the Europeans to which our response would be to emphasize nuclear retaliation and that would've been of course a very unhappy situation in Europe. No one wanted to see it happen.

*Q: As a political officer, how did you operate? What were you doing?*

HELMAN: I was participating, one might say in a dialogue between USNATO and the other members of NATO and NATO's professional staff on the one hand, and the State and Defense Departments also, because the U.S. ambassador to NATO, the permanent representative, essentially worked both for the secretary of state and the secretary of defense. He really worked for the President, but the U.S. ambassador to France, let's say, took his instructions from the secretary of state, but the U.S. ambassador to NATO, given the particular nature of that institution, had to be able to talk to both SECDEF and the SECSTATE. So one participated in that dialogue; we had our own policy recommendations to provide, some of which were really quite thorough and quite extensive. This was both under Harlan Cleveland, staunch Democrat, and under Ambassador Kennedy - he was a banker from Chicago, as I recall. He lasted about a year or so. No big deal. But he worked at the job.

The North Atlantic Council used to meet probably once a week and then there were the Council's political committee, the political-military committee. They would each publish an agenda for which we had to prepare. I might have to prepare a briefing memo plus a statement for the Ambassador in the Council, meet in advance with other delegation members to discuss where we might want to end up on particular issues, and ferret out problems. We would send back fairly extensive reports on Council meetings, with comments, analysis and recommendations.

There were particular studies that were often conducted under either a political committee or the full North Atlantic Council, keeping track of what's happening, for example in Czechoslovakia, and how the Allies should respond, if at all. We tried to develop a general meeting of the minds so that each ally could feel comfortable that all the allies, on a political level at least, were moving ahead in a fairly - not so much a coordinated way, but working off the same script, the same outlook. We also worked closely with NATO's international staff whose members helped prepare drafts, chaired committees, did research, kept the files and often served as the organization's institutional memory.

*Q: Did you develop the feeling that the center of power, as you might say in foreign affairs, had moved from the State Department to the National Security Council under Kissinger, or not?*

HELMAN: Very definitely. Of course we always got our instructions from the same sources, but one was never deceived where the real authority lay. We read the newspapers too - read the New York Times and the Washington Post and so on - and we understood that Secretary Rogers was not the inside force - Henry Kissinger was - and a lot of the ideas on European strategy, détente, or initiatives in NATO, came from the White House and Kissinger, particularly when Kissinger started developing his own back channels to NATO governments, for example - to Germany in particular. Egon Barr was the Advisor to Chancellor Brandt and was the great strategist of the time and the guru of Germany's Ostpolitik. He was to Brandt as Hal Sonnenfeldt was to Kissinger. We used to joke that Hal was "Kissinger's Kissinger."

*Q: I've finished interviewing Hal Sonnenfeldt.*

HELMAN: Well, I'm sure he'd have a lot to say. By the way, his son is an attorney specializing in telecommunications. Very qualified. So it's a small world.

But sometimes we would hear that Kissinger would be conducting discussions by backchannel; for example with Barr. We would never find out what was said and done between the two through our own channels, so what we would do was go to the German Delegation, explain the situation (they seemed to know in advance) and ask for their account of the Kissinger-Barr discussions). They cooperated.

*Q: Or what they knew. (laughs)*

HELMAN: Yes. My impression was there was a good deal more discipline, structure, within their service than there was often in ours. I did not have much to do with Secretary Rogers at the time; I got to know him quite well later on in the early '80s when he was back in law practice. Extraordinarily decent man. He put up with a lot.

*Q: I was just going to say he was an extraordinarily decent man with Nixon and Kissinger, who one couldn't describe in those terms.*

HELMAN: Well, they were in charge of American foreign and security policy. There was no question about it. The bureaucracy of the Foreign Service, State Department, I suppose to some extent the Defense Department had to accommodate themselves to those realities.

*Q: Well, did you find any disquiet within NATO ranks or the people you were talking to, by the fact that it became obvious that Kissinger was having secret meetings in the Kremlin and going behind places? I mean this sort of thing. I mean there's nothing diplomats hate more than stuff going on that they don't know about.*

HELMAN: Yes, exactly. And there was a lot of concern, curiosity, puzzlement. Everybody acknowledged the U.S. was indisputably the leader of the alliance. NATO, on the political level certainly, was primarily a forum for consultation, for exchange of views, for exchange of information, and coordination of policy and action. A forum where would, through mutual understanding of what the objectives were, coordinate foreign policies and activities on matters of common concern. And basically our ability to consult and work with our allies was limited because we didn't know what our own leadership was doing and saying back channel. Sometimes our instructions on what to say about developing events were available to our allies in the news - the New York Times or Le Monde or the International Herald Tribune or something like that. But they were as dazzled by Kissinger as everyone else was. In addition, they saw him as a "European" who was finally imparting some sophistication our foreign policy.

*Q: Was there a concern at that time that perhaps there could be the devil's bargain in Ostpolitik, on the German side, that if Germany was united and became neutralized, this would really leave a tremendous hole in the alliance? Was this something that people were concerned about or was this just one of those things that just wasn't going to happen?*

HELMAN: I think from the standpoint of the United States, one of the things that a Foreign Service officer dealing in NATO affairs learned very quickly is that our relationship with Germany, and Germany's future, and how we related, were absolutely central to our European and larger strategic posture. Germany was the heart of Europe; it was the strategic prize to be retained and to be extended. Everybody gave lip service to reunification; nobody really expected it to happen in our lifetimes. But Germany was all important and a lot of the strategy and politics of the NATO alliance centered around Germany - much more so than France, much more so than the United Kingdom.

The possibility of German neutralization as a price for reunification was always out there on the periphery. It arose in the context of the Austrian State Treaty back in the '50s when, as I recall, Khrushchev dangled a bargain: a reunified Germany in exchange for German neutrality. Some Germans were intrigued. One of the potential risks of Ostpolitik was always that it would come at the price of German neutrality and thus Germany's loss to NATO. So the whole process of Ostpolitik and the negotiations that subsequently took place were extremely important to everyone conscious of the downside but willing to work with this strongly maintained German policy.

Jock Dean was, as I recall, our political counselor in the mid-'70s in Bonn. I thought he did an absolutely brilliant job of tracking what was happening. I think by that time I probably had left USNATO and I was deputy director of NATO affairs back in the Department. So Germany was always a major topic and central player. The German delegation to NATO was always a strong one. The U.S. mission itself was always a strong one and I think that probably was one of the most impressive and intimidating aspects of being in USNATO; you were challenged by top-drawer people in your own Mission.

*Q: Who were some of the people then?*

HELMAN: Well, when I was there this was going into the Nixon years. Bob Ellsworth and then Don Rumsfeld were my ambassadors for a while there. David Bruce followed, but by then I was in NATO affairs in the Department. Larry Eagleburger was political adviser and I was his deputy. Dave Anderson, later ambassador to Yugoslavia and Tom Niles who was ambassador to Germany and Greece were staffers. Ray Garthoff was on the Mission's pol-mil side as was Jim Goodby for a while...

*Q: It's interesting, the old Yugoslav hands; both Larry and Tom Niles and David Anderson were under me as vice consuls in the consular section in Belgrade and I took Serbian with Larry Eagleburger. (laughs)*

HELMAN: Well, Larry pulled these guys together, you know, and took care of them.

*Q: He had his coterie.*

HELMAN: They were superb. Of course they went on to establish highly distinguished careers. I'm sure I'll pull up more names. George Vest was DCM, so you were forced to operate at your best all the time.

*Q: One of the things I find interesting is, and in a way almost continues to be, that here as you say Germany was central, not just geographically but in power too - industrial might, population, military, the whole thing - and yet it almost seems to have played a stealth role in foreign affairs. I mean you don't find a heavy German hand where you find a very heavy French hand. And I've heard some people say that the Germans let the*



*French do the heavy lifting and in a way work with the French, but keep a little behind them or something. Did you have any feel of that?*

HELMAN: I'm not sure that was true in my experience in USNATO since the French weren't part of the military structure. Germany was a very important actor in the military structure of NATO which provided an organic connection to US strategic strength. France couldn't come close to matching this. The French didn't pursue anything as sophisticated as Germany's Ostpolitik, although they supported it and the Germans as far as I am aware didn't seek any advance clearances from the French. The French were the principal proponents of detente and they presented a strong rationale for détente. But the Germans always understood that fundamentally the success of an Ostpolitik, or MBFR, of a CSCE, indeed, of fundamental security, depended upon the US and Alliance military strength and commitment.

*Q: This is an interesting thing because the CSCE, which later became the OSC, it became actually...*

HELMAN: It became a very important vehicle for the eventual dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet empire.

*Q: Unraveling. You know I'm trying to pick up sort of the attitude there. When you got there was this something that...when did this start?*

HELMAN: I'm trying to think. My recollection is it probably started in the aftermath of Czechoslovakia.

*Q: I would imagine. It would make sense because it started picking up during the Nixon time. I guess the idea being let's try to find a way to calm things down within Europe.*

HELMAN: There was some of it, there was also, on our part, a desire to use it as - one might say a political propaganda weapon - that is to set the bar fairly high in terms of liberalizing actions such as free flow of information and other concepts such as that, speculating that these are concepts that the Soviet Union and its allies could not accept. And if they did, then they would be working with a set of principles and practices that were fundamentally contrary to their own political structure. These principles and the wording used were familiar to a large extent from prior UN practice. The Eastern Europeans knew that. I was one of the few on the US side that knew it - an example of where my experience with the UN paid off in NATO. The dynamic which this started up, which was understood by the Europeans and even many Eastern Europeans better than we understood it at the time, was intensely subversive to Soviet hegemony. The whole concept of CSCE and the dialogue that was initiated under that general umbrella increasingly provided the liberal elements in Eastern Europe with a device to achieve ever more wiggle room for liberalizing their civic life and easing the Soviet's heavy hand. It gave them a way of achieving a certain greater margin of flexibility in the conduct of their policies and internal affairs. I think the fair evidence is that over time - this is over time

during the '70s - it did have the effect of considerably loosening some of the strictures internally within the East Bloc, and I think the Germans and the French and some of the other Europeans saw this rather more clearly than we did. Have you talked to George Vest at all?

*Q: I've talked to George.*

HELMAN: George did a brilliant job of managing the CSCE process.

*Q: You're talking too about how Henry Kissinger sort of undercut him while he was there.*

HELMAN: Oh, is that right? *(laughs)*

*Q: You're shocked! (laughs)*

HELMAN: Nothing every really shocked George. I used to ride home with him from work most days...

*Q: George Vest was saying how Kissinger would denigrate the negotiations that were going on for the OSCE to the Soviet ambassador, Dobrynin, in these private meetings, would then inform his colleagues in East Germany, or they would be informed and they would inform somebody like the Swedes or something. And George was saying somebody would come up from one of our friendly delegations and say, "What's this about your secretary of state," or at that point national security adviser, "not paying much attention to..." I mean it was this type of thing. Rather frustrating. CSCE, the initials keep changing. It was Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.*

HELMAN: The initials kept changing but the concept was pretty much the same.

*Q: The OSC later on. It's become an integral part of the whole détente process.*

HELMAN: There were ten years of discussions roughly before the Helsinki meetings. Maybe not quite ten years but there was a tidal stream that gradually developed in the course of the '70s, leading to the CSCE.

*Q: The other theme that was going on was the Mutual and Balanced Reduction of Forces.*

HELMAN: MBFR, yes.

*Q: How was that viewed? Was that viewed as going to happen or was it a good idea to have talks going anyway?*

HELMAN: You had to look at it from two different perspectives. This was a subject that the Europeans approached with a certain amount of hope and a certain amount of

trepidation. They certainly didn't want to see a reduction of U.S. capabilities in Europe; at that same time, from the standpoint of their own public opinion, the idea of reducing the perceived conventional threat to Europe was attractive. Europeans in those days well recalled what damage conventional war could do.

I should add I was not actively involved in the discussions of MBFR, but it was like the CSCE - it was a concept which one found it both difficult to support and to oppose at the same time. We played it both for the political advantage that one gained through a conceptually meritorious arms control concept, and yet develop over time a policy dealing with the actual reductions which was far more hard-nosed. In the end a lot of these issues conjoined. The whole debate back in the '80s, the reduction of medium-range missiles in Europe, was in a sense a resurrection of the BFR debate and involved some of the same concerns and considerations. But again this was not something had any responsibility for.

*Q: Well, during the '68 to '73 period while you were in USNATO, on the political discussions, were the French fully recognized - the fact that they weren't military members, does this mean that in a way they were half in and half out?*

HELMAN: Oh, I think the French were recognized for their particular position within NATO. They certainly didn't want to abandon that position in NATO; this would simply have left be the whole European security structure to the tender mercies of the United States and to some extent to the untrustworthy motives of Germany. France didn't want NATO to become at its heart simply a U.S.-German alliance. At the same time they recognized the value of NATO, I think, as a vehicle for U.S. participation in European affairs - which in part meant making sure that Germany was a force in Europe that the other Europeans could live comfortably with. We played that role very consciously. Some Germans recognized and I think valued it as well.

At the same time within NATO, members didn't worry much about the French because they couldn't help you much very often; they occasionally came up with a good idea - and they really were, except for the fact that things were done by consensus and this sometimes caused trouble every half year when we were drafting the communiqué that normally would close a NATO ministerial meeting. Twice a year the North Atlantic Council met at the level of foreign minister. And you always had your communique and its drafting gave the French an opportunity to negotiate the nuances and changes they considered would tilt it in their direction. But day to day they didn't contribute an awful lot; they didn't hinder an awful lot.

I was struck by the fact that they sent really first-rate people on the political side, in terms of their own Foreign Service. You had Francois de la Rose as ambassador there for a while; you had - I'm trying to think of his name; he was DCM under de la Rose. He was later the French ambassador in Washington. So they sent good people. It was a small delegation, as I recall, but then most French missions tend to be on the small side anyway.

*Q: In our delegation, speaking of that, I've talked to people who've served on some*

*delegations and say it's almost embarrassing because sometimes we send rather large delegations and often these are not unified delegations; half the delegations are sort of spying on each other to find out - you know, we're talking about State and Defense and maybe Treasury or something like this. Did you find that you had this type...particularly I would imagine Defense would be in there.*

HELMAN: You did have some conflicts. I think that problem was not of any great concern when it came to the permanent delegation to NATO. That is, in the Political Section of the U.S. Mission to NATO and the Political-Military Section we were a part of the same team; it was like an embassy and you did the bidding of your boss who happened to be the ambassador. And you paid attention to the DCM who, when it's George Vest, you paid attention to him anyway. And Larry Eagleburger could be relied upon to manage the whole process.

There was separate reporting to DOD on the part of some of the military members of the U.S. Mission. The situation was different when there was a foreign ministers' meeting, a ministerial meeting, when the delegation was larger but manageable, or when it dealt with a specific issue on something difficult and contentious, such as MBFR. Most often on arms control issues, the confrontations and competing interests in Washington were carried over into the delegation. In fact, I think the problem that you mention was found perhaps more frequently in the UN context or bilateral arms control negotiations where I've had some experience as well. We would send a delegation, let's say to an outer-space conference, or to a conference on the World Health Organization (WHO). There were lots of competing interests, including from the private sector. The phenomenon was often most acutely reflected in some of the large arms control conferences. It made it very difficult for an inexperienced head of delegation to manage things. I have seen discord result in competing positions being conveyed to other delegations. Such a breakdown of discipline is an example of how very difficult managing a delegation could be. There are ways of dealing with it if you know what your doing, but it's tough.

*Q: We've looked at the French and the Germans, how about the British? How did you find them during this time?*

HELMAN: The British were good solid members; we always maintained a very good dialogue with them. As a matter of fact, I think we had fairly good relations with most of the delegations to NATO; we were close to the Germans. I'd say the Germans and the Brits were the ones who had the strongest delegations and those were the ones with whom we had the most dialogue, most definitely.

*Q: The Italians, their temperaments are never terribly strong.*

HELMAN: The strongest Italian, and one of the greatest diplomats I've ever met, was Manlio Brosio, who happened to be secretary general of NATO for most of the time I was there. Of course he didn't speak for the Italian government, not directly anyway, but Brosio was superb and deserves a lot of credit for shepherding the Alliance through the

very hard years of the late '60s and early '70s. With one exception, Italy never sent a strong delegation - but decent in my judgment. Brosio behind the scenes always made sure that Italy did the right thing. The exception was Rinaldo Pettrignani, who subsequently was a long-time Ambassador to the U.S.

The Belgians were always strong, in part because of the personality of their perm. rep., de Staercke, who knew his country, who had been in that position for many years. He was Doyen, had almost total recall, and was utterly dedicated to the Alliance's success. He was a strong personality. De Rose of France was a highly sophisticated diplomat and so was, interestingly, Ross Campbell, who was the Canadian perm. rep. Very smart, very direct, highly respected by all of his colleagues in NATO. He contributed in a very substantial way. Interestingly, we reestablished our acquaintance in recent years on a business level. He represented Arianespace, the French rocket launch company, in Canada. He claims he well-remembered me from NATO years. I was most flattered and prefer to believe him.

*Q: Did the ministerial meetings more or less set the agendas? There would be foreign ministers and defense ministers and when they got together - did they get together, or?*

HELMAN: No, separately. Every once in a while they would meet together but generally they met in different fora, each twice a year, and they had different agendas, the Foreign Ministers' largely political, the Defense Ministers' largely addressed issues such as force structure, command and control, infrastructure requirements, and the like. Usually the preparations for a ministerial would occupy our time for a month and a half, two months, sometimes longer, before each ministerial.

The Ministerials were where countries, members of NATO, used to present their big ideas. This was certainly true under Nixon and later when Henry Kissinger became secretary of state it was very much the forum in which new ideas were presented. So it was twice a year the centerpiece of a lot of our activities. The ministers used the NATO communique, as far as we were concerned, to frame the road map on specific policy matters for the Allies over the next six months until the ministers met again.

*Q: Did President Nixon meet with NATO from time to time?*

HELMAN: My recollection is that, while I was there, there was no NATO meeting at head of state level. Those were really quite rare in those years. Nevertheless, Nixon would address NATO issues in some of his speeches, and as I recall one of the initiatives that NATO adopted on environment - let's see, what was the committee called? - on the challenges of modern society or something like that, which became a regular committee pulling in environmental experts and those on other issues common to industrial societies. It was a Nixon initiative, an effort on the part the administration at that time to breathe new political life and meaning into NATO. Some were a little cynical in their description of these initiatives, which some would say were designed to divert NATO from its central theme so that Nixon and Kissinger could handle them bilaterally. Pat

Moynihan, by the way, came up with the idea, and as I recall, Dick Lugar, then Mayor of Indianapolis, represented the U.S. at the Committee's initial meeting.

*Q: Was there concern within NATO that so much was going on outside the knowledge of...I mean deals with the Soviets and elsewhere. Was this a separate conversation or corridors?*

HELMAN: Yes. I suppose this was a matter of constant concern prior to Nixon and post-Nixon. It's almost built into the nature of our relationship to NATO, being, even then, a very major power and the only country in the West that could stand up to an aggressive Soviet Union. And the United States never allowed itself to be put into the position of uniformly withholding political or military action until a policy first passed through the NATO grinder. We retained a certain level of freedom of action and our allies understood that this was both desirable and inevitable. At the same time we tried to consult, that is inform and discuss some of our objectives with our allies, probably never enough to satisfy them, but probably a little more than we ever wanted to do and a good deal more than any other country similarly situated would have done. So there was a healthy and usually workable dynamic. And, of course, while not unique, it may have been a little more pronounced under Nixon; I would guess it probably was, given the nature of the president and of Henry Kissinger, but it couldn't have been unique to Nixon's administration.

*Q: Do you or your colleagues from other countries feel that sometimes you were getting instructions from Washington that really set your teeth on edge? That sort of thing got much more political later on, I think.*

HELMAN: Occasionally we were surprised by Washington but much of the time we maintained a pretty active dialogue with Washington and fed Washington a lot of policy proposals and analysis. I should add that I was, during my career, on both sides of the water. I was deputy political adviser to the U.S. Mission to NATO, and subsequently I was deputy director of RPM, which was the Department's principal backstop for NATO. So I saw it from both angles. I would say that there was a pretty good dialogue. It was, in part, because of the dynamics of working in a multinational, multilateral institution such as NATO; and it was in part a matter of personalities, with strong and capable people.

If you had a strong mission, you had that mission probably writing its own instructions, and if you had a strong RPM, it was probably the other way around. It was a good dialogue. While I was involved with NATO affairs, the mission was very seldom surprised or shocked, maybe unhappy because we may not have always liked our instructions. Of course, if you had a strong ambassador, an aggressive ambassador such as Harlen Cleveland, Bob Ellsworth and Don Rumsfeld, if you had a strong DCM and a strong political adviser such as Larry Eagleburger, you had a powerful team and the Department, DOD and the NSC would listen. And later on, when David Bruce came along, we had a new level of authority.

*Q: Sometimes I feel there's a dynamic that when you have an administration that, particularly at the National Security Council these days, it's possible to have almost separate little policies going on because some individuals grab the ball and there's nobody at the top to sort of supervise them or something. Ollie North being probably one of the worst examples, but there are other ones sometimes that...*

HELMAN: My own impression is that as time has gone on, U.S. foreign policy has become increasingly fragmented into smaller power centers, each wanting to and/or in fact having an impact on foreign affairs. I don't know that that was inevitable, but I find, looking at it from a rather uninformed vantage point right now, I find that certainly in national security policy there are independent power centers in the NSC and DOD and State and different segments of DOD, including the uniformed services, or CIA for that matter. These power centers have proliferated overseas, with their own communications facilities, and it's hard to believe that our ambassadors have a clue as to what some of these agencies are doing in their countries. In foreign economic policy I doubt that State plays as significant a role as before. You have the Trade Advisor, the Treasury, the NSC, Commerce and I suppose others. You now have offices within the NSC that deal with national economic policy. Environmental policy is all over the place, except State has its own assistant secretary for Oceans and Environmental Affairs and so on, but I don't know that it plays a very strong role in setting our policies with respect to many of those issues. And now there is the growing phenomenon of the private sector organizing to influence foreign policy. The so-called NGOs - non-governmental organizations - were a familiar phenomenon in the UN context. Now they have spread into other areas, as have other more organized and better targeted corporate and private commercial and political interest groups. I know of instances in which a multinational corporation has had representatives on the delegations of three or four countries, including the U.S., at the same conference.

*Q: Well, talking about the other side of the ocean, in '73 you moved back to Washington?*

HELMAN: I actually had my mid-career sabbatical, went to Princeton for a year from '73 to '74.

*Q: What were you doing in Princeton?*

HELMAN: I went to Woodrow Wilson School and I spent a year reading. I enjoyed it. *(laughs)*

*Q: This was the period of Watergate, too, wasn't it?*

HELMAN: Yes. The whole period, I was really rather lucky to be living in Brussels, a rather calm environment, and then Princeton. Not so much because I had planned on it - we had three school-age children. And, certainly not by design, we were able to dodge some of the pressures of drugs and other activities that seemed to be overwhelming high school students in the United States.

*Q: Your kids were in high school by this time?*

HELMAN: Two of my children were in high school in Brussels. My older daughter completed her high school education at Princeton High and then went on to Smith; and my younger daughter completed hers at T.C. Williams in Alexandria a year behind my older daughter, and she went up to Michigan. And my son, who was a number of years younger, in time went to Yale. The point I wanted to make is that we were, in a sense, in very comfortable isolation from a lot of the temptations and traumas that seemed to be upsetting American education at that time. There was Watergate, but I was a reader of newspapers at that time just as everybody else, particularly when I was sitting in Princeton.

*Q: At Princeton did you get any feel about how the intellectual community was looking at American foreign policy and all?*

HELMAN: Critically. *(laughs)* At that time the faculty was certainly on the liberal side of the political spectrum and with the developments over Watergate and the traumas of Vietnam, “Nixon” and “Republicans” were dirty words. I don’t recall anybody who wanted to stand up and support the administration, let alone most of its policies. There was a certain element of envy of Kissinger on the part of the faculty; they knew him as a fellow academic and were convinced they could do a better job as National Security Advisor. To the extent that anybody was interested in listening, I could speak with some authority on European policy and certainly I was capable of justifying what we were doing in Europe. In the aftermath of Czechoslovakia, Europe looked like a rather well-managed segment of our foreign policy. The Middle East and its perturbations, captured much more attention, and of course Vietnam overwhelmed everything. As a foreign service officer, I was a “good guy.”

I enjoyed spending some time on subjects that didn’t have anything directly to do with foreign affairs; I figured I could do the lecturing on a lot of foreign affairs issues rather than paying attention to the professors - several of whom became good friends - and I enjoyed meeting with the students and talking to them, taking classes with them. They were certainly bright. Boy, it was a good school. I was deeply impressed by the quality of the student body. My often stated conclusion was that the decision to admit women dramatically improved the competitiveness and quality of the student body.

*Q: Then in '74 you came back to Washington.*

HELMAN: Yes.

*Q: And right back into the NATO bit.*

HELMAN: Yes, deputy director. Ed Streetor was director, I was deputy director. Jim Lowenstein was deputy assistant secretary who was responsible at that time for NATO affairs. I forget who was assistant secretary at the time.



*Q: Well, you were there from '74 to?*

HELMAN: I was there from '74 - I think I was deputy director for about two years or so and then I became director of UNP, UN Political Affairs. This was probably in late '75, '76.

*Q: You came in just about the time Ford became president.*

HELMAN: Yes.

*Q: But Henry Kissinger was secretary of state. Was there any change really in our NATO policy outlook?*

HELMAN: No, I don't think so. You also had another important development, as far as I was concerned. Don Rumsfeld became secretary of defense, and of course he had a very strong background and certainly, having worked for him for a year when he was Permrep, I was both blooded and trusted. So you had a very powerful team in support of Ford, particularly on European policy. Moreover, David Bruce became our Ambassador to NATO. He was one of the few people around that Kissinger respected, and certainly would never undermine or embarrass. I think there was one other factor that was very significant at that time; by that time, as I recall, we had finally extricated ourselves from Vietnam and almost, I would say as a matter of relief, turned central attention to the European theater. This was particularly true of our army. Vietnam no longer dominated our foreign and national security policy.

We were emerging from the trauma of Watergate; we had a president who was never elected trying to establish a credible administration, we had a fairly strong team in support of him. It was my impression that they looked at European policy as sort of a refreshing area of U.S. initiative and confidence. No one contested its relevance. No one had anything bad to say about our European allies; our European allies were relieved that we finally were out of Vietnam.

I think there was one other element that at least I was able to discern, which was, I think, of fundamental importance; the U.S. Army in Vietnam had become severely diminished, if not almost psychologically disabled. It was a hugely traumatic experience for our Army - principally the Army rather than I think the other services - and they were able in the aftermath of Vietnam to adopt as a new vocation, the European theater and the defense of Europe; it gave them an area of activity which they, I think brilliantly, employed in order to resurrect reconstruct, reequip and recreate the U.S. Army. And of course the proof of how well they succeeded was in Desert Storm.

*Q: Well, something I guess on your watch was Portugal. I think one of the very interesting stories in American diplomacy is Frank Carlucci going to Portugal, because correct me if I'm wrong, but Henry Kissinger, and I'm sure others, were really concerned*

*about what was called Euro-communism. You had Belinguer and Italy who was presenting a new face of communism and then you had this officer revolt in Portugal which was a NATO country and seemed to be falling into the hands of the Communists. Was this in your watch?*

HELMAN: I was senior enough so that I could follow some of what happened, but I was not directly involved. I do know that there was a lot of discussion, a lot of concern, by Sonnenfeldt, the secretary, that those who had taken power in Portugal, while not themselves not necessarily Communists, were more or less a Karensky regime which could easily be manipulated and overthrown by Communists. And it was Frank Carlucci who was able to stand up and to say not so. He stood up to a very powerful secretary of state. And he was right. *(laughs)*

*Q: Oh, he was right. Oh, no, I think it's one of the sort of great stories of diplomacy, of here what a strong ambassador could do - because from what I gather Kissinger was almost ready to write Portugal off and freeze it out.*

HELMAN: That was my impression.

*Q: From your vantage point in the NATO thing, was Portugal a matter of discussion and what the hell is going to happen?*

HELMAN: It was a matter of corridor discussion. It was hard for the NATO council itself to discuss the internal politics of a member country. It would have been considered wrong, potentially a NATO version of the Brezhnev doctrine.

*Q: But this was more than that. This was a country that was slipping towards the enemy, you might say. If you wanted to play that clock...*

HELMAN: My recollection is that it was more a matter of multiple bilateral discussions on the part of the United States than it was an effort to engage the Alliance itself; you know, what do we do with this potentially errant member? I recall that by NATO Council decision, Portugal was cut off from some of the normal flow of classified information and reports from NATO. So there was NATO-related action that was taken. But I think the strategic issues flowing from the Portuguese situation were addressed in what we called "multiple bilaterals," that is, through a series of bilateral discussions with other allies to develop a common policy. And of course we had our own dialogue with the Portuguese that we conducted through Frank Carlucci. In retrospect, one is impressed at how rapidly and forcefully the U.S. leadership grabbed onto historical precedent as a way of characterizing and predicting the course of events in Portugal.

*Q: Well, I suppose too, we're talking about a secretary of state who really thought in European terms.*

HELMAN: Thought in European terms and was a genuine expert and master of European

politics and diplomacy. Sure. I had several occasions to work with Kissinger and found him tough, smart but fair. I recall sending him a memo prepared by one of the people working for me on a fairly complex issue of nuclear strategy. The memo was somewhat contrarian, as I recall. To my surprise and to the pleasure of the officer involved, Kissinger, who was traveling, sent back a message of commendation. That didn't happen very often. My last meeting with him was after his departure from government. He visited Geneva while I was Ambassador. He called and invited me to lunch with his son. It was a most pleasant event.

*Q: He'd done the Congress of Vienna for his dissertation, I think.*

HELMAN: After all, Hal was one of our outstanding experts on the Soviet Union. So this was a formidable team. They had a lot of experience and a lot of credibility in their judgments. And, of course, fortunately they were wrong in Portugal's case. At that time also I think NATO began a dialogue with the Spanish to see if somehow they couldn't be brought more into more of the mainstream of European thinking on politics and defense, could be better educated on some of the issues that were of concern to the Alliance. I recall we arranged for senior staff level briefings between NATO and Spain. It was an eye opener, with the Spanish seeing the threat as coming not across the Central European plain from the Soviet Union, but as a consequence of North African and Mediterranean instability.

*Q: You did this until '75 and then where did you go?*

HELMAN: I went back to IO and became director of UN Political Affairs.

*Q: And you did that from '75 to ?*

HELMAN: I did that from late '75 to '76, after the election of Jimmy Carter. I then became deputy assistant secretary in '77.

*Q: We'll pick this up again in '75 when you were going to IO. Gerry, you were off to IO where you were DAS?*

HELMAN: No, I was initially director for UN Political Affairs. That was under Gerald Ford. And then with the new administration, Bill Maynes came in as assistant secretary, I was asked to be deputy assistant secretary and I took the job.

*Q: Well, then you were in IO from '75 until?*

HELMAN: '75 until I went to Geneva and that was in '79, I guess.

*Q: '75 is under Gerry Ford. You were doing Political Affairs for the UN. How did you see the United Nations as it fit into what we were after, as a political instrument?*

HELMAN: I've always viewed the United Nations as being potentially a valuable tool of U.S. diplomacy. I was very conscious of the fact - a fact that seems to be often forgotten now - that the U.S. was the inspiration for the United Nations. We created the United Nations much more so than anyone else and the Charter for the United Nations is the treaty that very much reflects our world view. And so I've always felt that the UN's susceptible to U.S. influence and U.S. guidance, and indeed I think for much of the history of the United Nations, at least until the early '80s, that in fact reflected reality. We were highly influential in the United Nations; there were some defeats, one of which was the Zionism as Racism Resolution. The prospect of China coming into the United Nations was a move that we very vigorously opposed, although it was a losing battle at the end of the day. The machinery of the United Nations, and I mean not only the political machinery, but the humanitarian affairs machinery, the social and economic part of it, with proper attention and diplomacy, could be employed to reinforce whatever our political or social or economic objectives might be on a global basis. But all of that takes attention, knowledge and a certain level of experience and skill.

*Q: When you took over doing Political Affairs, were there any particular issues that were of prime importance that you were involved in?*

HELMAN: Well, the Middle East was always a matter of great importance to the United States and the United Nations played a substantial role in the diplomacy of the Middle East. That did not reflect our preference, and certainly not a preference on Israel's part, but the Arab states and the Palestinians saw strategic advantage in maintaining a leading UN role. It strengthened their ability to influence diplomacy and influence the direction of events. Increasingly, also, in the United Nations, African affairs were achieving substantial prominence. Apartheid in South Africa, the issue of Rhodesia, later Zimbabwe, all of these took a lot of time and attention, and of course there was the never-ending problem with the Congo. It was in the Congo that the concept of UN peacekeeping as a combined military and civilian force was first developed to a sophisticated level in the Congo, and the UN role, in one fashion or another, was retained for many, many years after the '60s, into the '70s and so on. Today we would call it a nationbuilding role. In time, Mobutu took over and in his own way dealt with civil unrest. Today, the UN perforce has become the nationbuilder of last resort. *(laughs)*

*Q: How did we look upon this resolution which would come up perennially? You had mentioned before Zionism as Racism. What was the background of this and how did we deal with it?*

HELMAN: This was before I returned to UNP. Our Ambassador at that time was Pat Moynihan in the Nixon years. I can't be precise because I was not involved, but my recollection is that represented an effort on the part of the Arab countries to stigmatize Israel, and perversely to brand Israel, a Jewish state, as being racist - something which obviously was highly offensive to Israelis - to Jews - and to Americans and Europeans as well. But the Arabs had the votes and the Soviets saw it as an opportunity for mischief. And they had the votes. It occurred in the General Assembly so these things are non-

binding but they attached stigma and serve as agitprop, particularly when it gets repeated as much as it was, and represented the kind of Big Lie that gets repeated and propagated until it gains a perverse legitimacy. And of course the United States, at Israel's urging, sought in various ways to diminish, in part to prevent its spread to other UN bodies where they tended to repeat some of these formulas. And of course this was a period of time when our relations with the Arab countries were not terribly good - something that changed after Camp David.

*Q: What was your particular job when you did this?*

HELMAN: I was director of United Nations Political Affairs. Subsequently, as deputy assistant secretary I was also responsible for UN Political Affairs but also had a broader range of responsibilities. As director of UNP, I backstopped- (end of tape)

-managed, if you will, our political relations in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Security Council in particular, which I must say became an increasingly active and responsible body and turned to as a forum for serious diplomacy on the part of the United States under Jimmy Carter. Very much so.

*Q: Under Ford who was the representative?*

HELMAN: To the United Nations?

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: I forget who was there after Pat Moynihan.

*Q: Did you feel the Ford administration was not giving as much attention as the Carter administration?*

HELMAN: I think that's true. It's not so much that it was ignored, but our strategy in the United Nations largely was defensive, and I didn't think it had to be. Things changed quite radically with Carter and with Andy Young coming in as our perm.rep. And DonMcHenry, as well. Andy was a somewhat controversial fellow, but I thought he was terrific. I developed great respect and affection for him.

*Q: I'd like to stick to the earlier part first under the Ford time. What about the China recognition? We had already, to all intents and purposes, established relations with China. We had gone back and forth; the president had been to China - this was Nixon and all. How were we dealing with China at that time? I'm talking about mainland China.*

HELMAN: Well, mainland China we dealt with generally outside the venue of the United Nations. It was only after we established, by agreement with communist China, mainland China, a new arrangement vis-à-vis Taiwan, when we set up the Taiwan Interest Office,

that we endorsed mainland China as entering the United Nations, and, most importantly for China, a seat as a Permanent Member of the Security Council.

*Q: During the first part of your time in IO, did you get any feeling for the attention that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger paid towards the UN?*

HELMAN: Kissinger, when it came to the Middle East, employed the United Nations I thought fairly effectively in a limited and controlled way. The agreements concluded in the aftermath of the '73 conflict were examples of that. They both employed the United Nations but also kept it at arms length. For example, the Sinai observer force, while being established on the model of a peacekeeping force, was very carefully isolated from the United Nations. A separate institution was set up in part in reaction to the way in which in the '67 war U Thant withdrew United Nations observer forces there really without protest.

*Q: It was often felt, people would say well, there's a legal reason and all, but as a practical matter it surprised everybody, including Nasser, who was demanding it, I think.*

HELMAN: I think Nasser pretended surprise because he really could not have been expecting military resistance from such a light force. After all, U Thant was responsible for lives as well and to have offered some military resistance would have been futile and deadly - assuming Nasser would've followed through. There is good evidence that Nasser wanted to take on the Israelis and thought he could win this showdown. I don't think U Thant was ever inclined to bluff his way, but at least raising a political hue and cry might have been worthwhile. But U Thant really offered very little of anything, and it remains a puzzle. I think had he, probably the Egyptians would have paused. But then again I think the Israelis would've cleaned their clock anyway. *(laughs)*

*Q: Well, this is just it. I think from that time on, the Israelis looked upon the UN as a hostile place. Did you get this as being essentially a hostile place?*

HELMAN: Yes. It was, but I think the Israelis much before that concluded that the UN was hostile territory.

*Q: It was dominated by the Arabs.*

HELMAN: And the Russians, and the Chinese, and the Europeans on the Security Council were increasingly neutral in favor of the Arabs. So it was not a forum in which the Israelis felt they would ever get an even shake and that's not really changed.

*Q: No, it continues as of today with great suspicions about the United Nations.*

*One of the things that all of our embassies shudder at is when the annual voting list comes - I mean the subjects that are going to go out and we send instructions out to be sure that you persuade the country in which you are stationed to vote the right way on a*

*treaty or what-have-you. I mean much more important things and all. I assume you were more or less responsible for putting together the list.*

HELMAN: Yes.

*Q: Did you know what was coming up?*

HELMAN: The agenda of each General Assembly would be published well in advance of the General Assembly itself, so we had a fairly good idea, and also based upon what the last General Assembly, and General Assemblies before that, did, you know pretty much what's going to be happening. The instruction was an exercise which we thought certainly was valuable to the bureau because it helped focus our thinking, and that of other parts of the Department, as well. It related to the process of preparing the usual array of position papers and everything else for a very large and distinguished US delegation, most of whom were outsiders excited by this opportunity to serve their country. And then we felt it would be helpful to our embassies around the world because they would have some idea of what they might be asked to do in the event that things went badly. We knew quite well that a fair number of countries rarely instructed their permanent representatives in New York, but nevertheless when the United States felt that something was particularly important we always wanted to have the option of going back to capitols and try to persuade them to persuade their permanent representative to do the right thing.

You have to remember as well that for many, many years - I think probably still now - the delegation to the General Assembly is a pretty distinguished one. You not only have an Ambassador as Permanent Representative who has normally been a member of the cabinet - I'm not sure that's always well-advised, but nevertheless that's the way our leadership has played it - but also, for the General Assembly, fairly distinguished private citizens are appointed to various roles and two senators and two representatives. All of these people are capable, serious and desirous of taking an active part in the General Assembly on behalf of the United States. They take it seriously, thank goodness, because these are often serious matters. The United States has always made, at least in my experience, a major effort in the General Assembly, and in the assemblies of the various specialized agencies in Geneva and elsewhere, to prevail and to persuade others. We tried to play the multilateral role as effective as we could - and we did so successfully most of the time. Our outside delegation members often genuinely strengthened our diplomacy. But they needed guidance and the position papers and instructions were part of that process.

*Q: How did we operate within the United Nations apparatus? Let's say the countries which really had no particular stake in a matter and their vote was up. Was there anything we could kind of offer countries; do we sit around and figure out aid packages or what-have-you, or something like that?*

HELMAN: I recall later on, particularly beginning with Ronald Reagan and Jeane Kirkpatrick, an increasing effort was made somehow to tie the vote to possible benefits.

How countries conduct themselves - how they vote in the General Assembly, tie that to aid or other benefits that the United States normally accords others. Certainly an effort was made to persuade countries that their overall relationship with us is in part a function of how they behave at the General Assembly - that this is important to us, and a vote against the United States on a significant issue is not a free shot. But there always was strong resistance to that approach on the part of the geographic bureaus. They didn't want to see their carefully managed bilateral relationships fouled up by what they considered extraneous issues raised in a forum about which they knew little.

*Q: It was sometimes used as a way of countries showing their independence and sometimes it was out of spite.*

HELMAN: That's right, and various excuses were made. For example they would say, "Well, what can I do? The Africa group decided by democratic vote to vote one way and I had to go along with my group." That was a frequent excuse and increasingly, the General Assembly in particular, broke up into regional groups. Those could be fairly effective and provided cover for many countries whose interest in the issue was nil. And countries tied themselves to those groups and used that as sort of a shield against U.S. retribution, not always very effectively, I must say.

*Q: At that time was there in your office a sense of frustration that we were sort of allowing these countries to have free shots?*

HELMAN: Yes, there was that. I must say I probably took it more in stride. This to be said, there weren't that many of those free shots. My recollection is we normally prevailed. Very few votes were hostile to us on an issue that made a difference to us. That doesn't mean we won every one, and of course the ones we lost were the ones that always received the publicity. But by and large I thought we did fairly well in the General Assembly and much better in the Security Council.

*Q: Were you feeling the heat of an isolation of sort of right wing element within Congress or did this come more pronounced later on?*

HELMAN: That became more pronounced later on; it became more pronounced under Reagan and Jeane Kirkpatrick. I think the key decision made under Reagan and the neo-conservatives led by Jeane Kirkpatrick had to do with funding UN operations - our annual dues - something that was a matter of constant concern to us. The position that the United States had taken up until 1981, '82, whenever it was, was that payment of our assessed contribution was a treaty obligation. At the same time we were constantly applying pressure to reform the United Nations to make it more efficient and all of that - efficiency is something everybody likes to see. I don't recall whether it was the Ford or the Carter Administration that pretty much imposed the practice of zero-based budgeting as a way of promoting economy. We, together with other countries successfully introduced some major changes because most of the UN's money came from the U.S. and its allies. And Congress bought that because, you know, you have a treaty obligation, a contractual



obligation, you meet it. And this was, I would say, the almost universal opinion, not only of the United States but of all members. You remember the whole drama for years in the '50s and beyond of Soviet arrearages, where they came within an ace of having their General Assembly vote taken away from them, and that was based upon our position and the position that had been taken by everybody, virtually, that you are required to pay your dues.

Reagan and Kirkpatrick turned that on its head; said no, there is not a legal obligation to pay. She cooked up with some of her friends, a rather - what I call tortured - rationale, but nevertheless it became the position of the administration and was accepted by Congress. After that every congressman saw our contribution to the United Nations as a free shot. Since no congressman had the United Nations as a constituent, maybe except for a few congressmen from New York who felt a certain responsibility, it became a constant source of log-rolling and amendments and artificial requirements imposed upon our contribution to the United Nations, and became a bloody mess. A total mess.

*Q: But you at least didn't have that?*

HELMAN: We didn't have that. That happened when I was no longer responsible for United Nations affairs. Thank goodness because I felt it was fundamentally wrong. Later on, as Deputy to the Under Secretary, I was able to get in some shots. One effort made by Jeane was to reduce the percentage of the total budget we would be required to pay. It was calculated on the basis of a complex, negotiated formula based on ability to pay. This was in '82-'83. I pointed out in a memo to George Shultz that such an effort was self-defeating. With money comes influence. I still have his scribbled note saying he agreed fully.

*Q: How did you find relations with our representatives up in the United Nations? Did things work pretty well?*

HELMAN: Yes and no. I normally got along very well with them. We used to have our shouting matches on how to handle some developments, but by and large got along very well. The real problem always had been the relationship between the Permanent Representative, who was a member of the cabinet, and the Secretary of State, who also was responsible for foreign affairs. To a certain extent these were competing centers of power. And we've had permanent representatives who never really felt that they were all that obligated to take instructions from the Secretary of State, thank you; they were appointed by the President and would report to the President. And this always gave rise to tensions and the burden of managing that was always on the assistant secretary for IO. Adlai Stevenson was a strong-willed fellow, so was Arthur Goldberg. I'm not sure that Pat Moynihan really felt he needed instructions from anybody.

*Q: When you think about it, this is not a bunch of pussycats up there.*

HELMAN: That's right. And Andy Young, for all his charm and laid-back attitude, had

his own personal relationship with Jimmy Carter that went back in Georgia politics that Cy Vance never could match. I mean these guys went back a long way. Jimmy Carter, in his rise in Georgia to governor, relied on support from the black community, and that's Andy Young's base. He was a congressman from Georgia for several terms. So this relationship had the kind of content that those of us involved in foreign affairs couldn't begin to fathom. But there it was; it represented both the positive and negative aspects of our past practice of making our UN Ambassador a member of the cabinet. I've always recommended against that. It may have meant that certain very distinguished people would not have taken the job, but then, when Presidents decided not to bother with Cabinet status, it allowed people like Don McHenry and Tom Pickering to get the job, and both were flat-out superb....

*Q: I think is something like when you had somebody like Cabot Lodge or something like that. This is something to dangle out there.*

HELMAN: Oh, Cabot Lodge thought he should be secretary of state. Half the guys who have been our perm. reps. really thought that they should be secretary of state.

*Q: (laughs) Again, we're still talking about the Ford period. How did...*

HELMAN: Of course Madeline Albright became secretary of state.

*Q: Yes. How did you find relations at the time, under Ford, with the Soviet Union?*

HELMAN: I don't have any strong recollection - the usual opposition in the Security Council and the normal sort of harassment. The Soviet Union, as I recall, never struck me as a serious problem in the United Nations, at least while I was involved. They were unimaginative and predictable and often on the defensive. There was always the threat of a veto and they would protect their clients as we would protect ours from harmful action by the Security Council. Under Carter things changed a bit because we developed a strategy which was designed to make it politically very difficult for the Soviet Union to exercise a veto. The whole Namibia strategy was part of that. But that's a different administration.

*Q: Under the Ford administration were we taking any particular stand on South Africa and apartheid?*

HELMAN: We recognized that the UN had a responsible role to play, but you may recall that towards the latter part of his stewardship Henry Kissinger undertook some very active diplomacy vis-à-vis Rhodesia and vis-à-vis South Africa, and gave a surprising amount of attention to it whether it got anywhere or not. It was almost the kind of shuttle diplomacy he had pursued in the Middle East. It certainly didn't result in any particular success but he did devote a lot of time to it. And to do that, he had to acknowledge the role of the United Nations because it did play a major role in enforcing the existing embargos.

*Q: Well, now, January 20, 1977 the Carter administration came in. Did you feel at the beginning a real change?*

HELMAN: Oh, yes. No question about it. Certainly the Carter administration came in and first of all put some very strong people in New York - Andy Young, politically very strong, and Don McHenry, who was one of our Ambassadors up there under Andy and largely dealt with political issues. We've always had five ambassadors up there, the permrep, the DCM and three others. By that time, or shortly after Carter took over, I became deputy assistant secretary after Bill Maynes was named assistant secretary, and I worked very closely with Don McHenry. We went back a long way together. He was also, and still is, a close personal friend.

They brought in, I would say, an attitude towards the United Nations which defined the United Nations as an institution which could serve, in an active, positive fashion, U.S. foreign policy objectives, and they sought to employ it for those purposes. They gave a good deal more emphasis to Africa. Andy Young and Don McHenry explain part of that but I think there was just quite a different spirit towards the organization. There was another factor, and that was Jimmy Carter's deep moral commitment to Africa and to human rights. And he wasn't just kidding. Not that the Ford administration was hostile to the UN particularly, except that Kissinger I thought saw the United Nations as peripheral and potentially troubling to his diplomacy, by and large.

*Q: Yes, he was very much making deals - and I'm using this in a positive sense - on an individual basis. He belonged to that school of diplomacy.*

HELMAN: Of course the Ford administration was the one that voted for Kurt Waldheim as secretary general. *(laughs)*

*Q: Kurt Waldheim later came into disgrace because of his involvement with German army killing of people and all of that in the Balkans. Was there any disquiet on our part about Kurt Waldheim at the time?*

HELMAN: Never. As a matter of fact we generally found Kurt Waldheim to be helpful, available, accessible - not an activist secretary general, you're not going to get too many surprises from him. Of course we didn't know about his background and there was nothing in his performance that betrayed those kinds of traits. The secretary, Cyrus Vance, was in frequent communication with Waldheim, as was, I recall, Kissinger before him on certain issues and they found him a helpful, available, and a reasonably adroit diplomat.

*Q: Was there a feeling in IO that you'd been around the block a number of times with other secretaries general of the United Nations where you prefer an activist secretary general or one who is a little less active?*

HELMAN: Less active, no question about it. The US always got along with activist secretary generals as long as they agreed with us. We seemed to want an activist secretary general until he's active in the wrong way and then we looked to get rid of him. Boutros-Ghali was an example of that. The most famous activist secretary general, the one who sort of set the mold, was Dag Hammarskjold, who really, together with a few others, invented peacekeeping and sought to drive the diplomacy and nationbuilding in the Congo in a very forceful way. He died in the effort. There have been a few other activist secretaries general. Perez de Cuellar, Waldheim's successor, struck a nice balance, although he was not especially interested in administration. Kofi Annan strikes me having the right balance between activism and administration. The United States, I suppose today would say that the job of secretary general is simply to be a good administrator - stay out of other stuff and, of course, do what we tell him to do. That's an exercise in wishful thinking. No secretary general is going to do that, nor can he do that, nor, if we think about it a bit, should we want him to do that. I found most of these fellows to be smart, adroit, interested mainly in the political side of the job and fully appreciative of the need to work closely with the US. And they certainly did not want to cross us.

*Q: Well, part of it is that any administration that comes in, particularly the one we have today - this is the Bush II administration - one has the feeling that they want to be masters of the world and they know the best thing to do and they're not really as interested in working together with others unless they find they just have to.*

HELMAN: I think this has probably been the administration least inclined to engage in multilateral diplomacy of any in my experience. Senior Bush was really quite adroit in managing the United Nations. Of course he knew it well; he was the permanent representative in the early '70s under Nixon.

*Q: Was senior Bush at the United Nations when you were in UN Affairs?*

HELMAN: No.

*Q: He was there under Nixon; I'm not sure if he carried through or not.*

HELMAN: That was when I was with NATO affairs. I recall meeting him when he came to USNATO for briefings in preparing for his UN job. But he understood the UN and he was really pretty skillful in managing it, beginning with his choice years later of Tom Pickering as Ambassador there. Bush knew that the UN can be employed in a way to contribute to our larger strategic objectives. Desert Storm was a brilliant example of that.

*Q: When Bill Maynes came in, could you describe his outlook and method of operations? By the way, I have interviewed him, but your impression of him.*

HELMAN: He's an old friend. He was in the Foreign Service and I knew him when he was in the Foreign Service. Along with a couple of other Foreign Service officers, he had resigned because of Vietnam. He went to work on the Hill, got some very valuable

political experience working there and in Presidential campaigns and then came back with the Carter administration. A very bright fellow. A good friend. He and I, I think, had very similar philosophies with respect to the United Nations, which is as I described it before; the United Nations properly managed, properly handled, with proper diplomacy, could serve U.S. political objectives in a variety of ways. If we learned to get it right, if we pay attention, the UN and UN peacekeeping could serve as diplomatic and force multipliers for the U.S.

*Q: Were we having problems with the part of the United Nations that was social affairs and all that?*

HELMAN: Yes except I didn't get involved in that. *(laughs)* Until I went to Geneva, as a matter of fact.

*Q: (laughs) Sounds like you ducked it.*

HELMAN: No, we just had other...

*Q: Could you explain what the problem was?*

HELMAN: I think there was a lot of trouble with the ILO (International Labor Organization) and UNESCO (UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). With UNESCO, there were management problems, and problems, as well, with its direction, and the influence which more radical states were having on its policies, particularly those dealing with freedom of the press. But I studiously avoided it, except when later on I came back from Geneva and I was involved with the undersecretary for political affairs as senior adviser and deputy to him, I got involved simply because no one knew enough to touch it and it needed, I felt, a little more mature guidance.

*Q: The best way of describing it is that the French intellectual left, or something like that.*

HELMAN: I guess so, but it was more than that. The Soviets and the more radical third-worlders were managing to put restrictive measures in the guidelines dealing with press freedom.

*Q: Maybe not.*

HELMAN: I wouldn't contest that. When I finally turned my attention to UNESCO –this was back in the early '80s - my conclusion was that part of the problem was the United States wasn't paying enough attention to it, that if we in fact put our muscle to it, then we could change things. A question was, even if we did, was it still worth it? And some people felt it wasn't; as a matter of fact, certainly the Reagan administration felt it wasn't. Others felt that you don't give up the ideological battle because occasionally you lose the votes. Just go back in there and fight again. Slug it out. Do a better job. I felt it was worth the fight, largely because of the relationship between UNESCO and education programs

around the world, particularly in the elementary grades in developing countries, and I thought it was worth the United States fighting that battle. I know we would eventually have prevailed. Others felt it just wasn't worth it. Those others prevailed.

*Q: I'm not sure if it was during your time but one of the issues that I recall was dealing with the press and the media.*

HELMAN: Sure. Leonard Marks was one of those who fought hardest in favor of free press principles. But UNESCO came out with a bunch of guidelines that in effect condoned or accommodated control of the press.

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: You fight that though. Leonard Marks, whom I got to know quite well and quite affectionately, was typically the head of the U.S. press delegations to those and bitterly opposed all of that stuff, but also opposed our leaving. Thought it was a mistake; you don't give up. I certainly agreed. You don't leave the field to the bad guys.

*Q: This is sort of a problem in American diplomacy when it gets into the political field - it gets into Congress and all. There's a tendency to say screw you and let's walk away, rather than to say we will prevail.*

HELMAN: Sure.

*Q: It's hard, isn't it, with Congress and sort of the American people, they can stir up popular sentiment and all and it makes it very difficult in the United Nations.*

HELMAN: That's right, it does indeed. But all the polls have shown for years very strong American popular support for the United Nations, and of course it's hard to summarize the basic purposes of the United Nations without most Americans realizing that, hey, that's what we're for.

But the UN had become, I can tell you one of the reasons, a political football, increasingly so. And this is without referring to the nuttiness of the radical right in the United States - the black helicopters and other terrible things.

*Q: UN concentration camps, all this sort of thing. I mean there's a big conspiracy.*

*In the first place, how were relations between Bill Maynes and Andy Young?*

HELMAN: Oh, close and personal. Not that there wasn't friction, because I think Andy on his part viewed Bill as a very capable, but subordinate figure, which in fact he was. But I felt that there was a lot of mutual respect. Bill of course had to be concerned about Cy Vance's relationship with Andy but again, on a personal level, it was always very good. You probably have some appreciation of the personalities of those two men; it's

hard to perceive their getting along anything but well. Andy used to get himself into embarrassing situations with some of his comments. The press used to pick up on it and play it sometimes for sardonic humor, the point implied being that Andy was way out of his depth. I always felt that there was a certain element of racism that explains the press play on some of Andy's less adroit statements. But Andy always had a reason for what he said and they showed his political insight. I sometimes used to call him and say, "Andy, why did you say that?" (*laughs*) And he used to tell me, and, actually, it made sense.

I remember once he made some comments about Qadhafi - this was a time of really great animosity, great hostility towards Qadhafi - and I think Andy suggested some sort of negotiation or meeting with the man, and I said, "Andy, what was that all about?" and he said, "Look, I learned a long time ago that especially with enemies, I want to get face to face with him. That way, it's harder for him to do hurt me." (*laughs*) But remember, this guy came out of the civil rights movement when it was bloody dangerous and there really were enemies out there and you could get killed. He was a very bright spirit, a delightful man and courageous. Here's an example of what I mean. My wife and I were invited to Andy's swearing in. It was at the White House, with the President presiding in the East Room, with a large reception following. What struck me was the composition and joy of the crowd. It consisted of a mixture of black and white Americans, lively, smart and feeling great to be where they were. Remember, this was after the trauma of the civil rights movement and Vietnam. All that turmoil seemed behind us and there seemed every reason to be happy and optimistic. It was a wonderful feeling and these were Andy's people. And my wife and I felt part of it.

*Q: Of course he did attract the press because he was lively and so they were all over him. I mean they delighted because he was known as good copy.*

HELMAN: Yes, and also of course remember his personality and the fact that he was black helped us gain a great deal of support in the General Assembly among the African countries who looked at him as (*laughs*) - I was going to say a white knight - but Andy was smart, certainly had a close relationship with the president, easy to get along with, certainly supportive of me, for example, available to me when I called him. The FSO's I knew who worked with Andy universally appreciated the talents he brought to our diplomacy. I worked typically with Don McHenry. Andy was very supportive of the initiative on Namibia that Don and I in part cooked up. But one of the most difficult weekends of my life was when Andy paid a call on the PLO representative (*laughs*) and got himself at the end of the day canned. I was acting assistant secretary. I forget where Bill was; he was off traveling someplace and Secretary Vance was off someplace too, so I worked with Warren Christopher on this.

*Q: He was undersecretary at that time?*

HELMAN: He was number two, the deputy secretary. A marvelous man and very supportive, certainly of me and the work I was in. But that was a hard weekend and the president ended up firing Andy. By the way I've always suspected Andy would never

have done something like that unless he thought that the president wanted him to do that; not so much that the president said, “Andy, I want you to go hunt down the head of the PLO observer delegation in New York and talk to him about what was happening” but I think Andy felt he had an instinct about the President that told him that this was something the president would like him to do. Remember, Carter came from nowhere to become Governor of Georgia and relied heavily on the black vote—Andy’s people. Andy himself was at least a two-term Congressman and a pretty savvy politician. I recall once, in 1978, when there was a rumor about that Kissinger might run in 1980 for the retiring Senator Javits’ seat. I asked Andy what he thought. Andy laughed and commented that we FSO’s didn’t understand politics. When he, Andy, decided to run for Congress, he had to go to every red-neck ward heeler boss and ask for support. It was the only way to get the nomination. “Trust me, Henry will never expose himself to that humiliating process.”

*Q: To put it in context, this was probably one of the more stupid agreements that Henry Kissinger entered into; he allowed the Israelis to essentially dictate whom we could talk to. It never made sense. You always should be able to talk to the other side and have it written into...and eventually it was picked up and put through Congress and all that.*

HELMAN: Certainly Andy felt that we should never restrict ourselves in terms of dialogue.

*Q: I think time has always proved that. Had there been other incidents where he’d been sniffing around the PLO or something? Had we been warning him?*

HELMAN: I’m not sure if there were warnings, I don’t recall. Bill Maynes would know. But he certainly was inclined, as you suggest, to talk to people; he was ready to talk to Qadhafi, anybody. The man had great charm. I recall early in his tenure - this was on the Rhodesia question when together with the Brits we organized a meeting for the first time with of the Rhodesian guerilla leadership. It took place on Malta. I went with Andy to that meeting with a few others. You had Mugabe and others, with the military as well as political leadership. We went there with the then British Foreign Secretary, David Owen. It was a fascinating event. Owen, who was certainly very skillful and a good politician, took a very proper kind of British schoolmasterish stance towards these guys and you could see the black Rhodesians, the Zimbabweans, just freeze; I mean you could feel the hostility. Andy sort of moved in, said the same thing substantively, but he had them eating out of the palm of his hand. I was impressed. The Rhodesia crisis was eventually resolved by Lord Carrington but Andy, I think, contributed very effectively to that process.

*Q: It’s almost forgotten now but this was a great focus of our attention. This was during the white government of Ian Smith who’d Unilateral Declaration of Independence, UDI, was a buzz term at that time. We were trying to diffuse it and there was a civil war going on there.*

HELMAN: There was and it was a bitter one; it was a deadly one. It was eventually



resolved. Henry Kissinger tried his hand at it and made very little progress. Andy I think contributed a good deal and set the stage, it's my recollection, for Carrington to finally lock it up. Our attention turned, not too long after that, to Namibia which was the focus of much of our effort in UN diplomacy for a long while.

*Q: Don McHenry played quite a role in that.*

HELMAN: Don played a great role. I handled the State Department part of that role, together with the African Bureau, but truth be told I think Don and I drove the policy on that.

*Q: Was there a problem with the African Bureau? I mean usually the organizational bureau would be yours and the geographic bureau being the African Bureau - you know, it's territory.*

HELMAN: Well, its turf. Well, in part it was who had the idea first - I think we did. There was also a very good personal relationship between Dick Moose and Bill Maynes, and Bill pretty much relied on me— I pretty much managed our State Department's part of it, with a lot of participation from the African Bureau - and very good participation. I recall it was Don Pederson that I worked with. He was terrific and we worked very much as a team. I also knew Dick Moose personally and well from when he was in the Foreign Service. But I think the reason why IO played a major role in it was that the innovative diplomatic device we developed was centered on the United Nations and the Security Council. And the whole complex status of Namibia was wrapped into the arcana of UN institutions and practice. Over the years, the UN had made Namibia, as a Trust Territory, essentially its ward. The UN was its legal guardian despite the obvious fact that South Africa occupied and governed the place. I should say that I was surprised and pleased that Don McHenry and I, and Don Pederson were given almost carte blanche and all the support we needed from the Secretary and Andy Young on down. It was hugely gratifying.

We took advantage of the fact that through serendipity at that time there were five members of the Security Council who were Western, three of them had vetoes. Germany was on the Security Council, of course France, Britain, and the United States. Canada was the fifth. So you had a very strong Western group on the Security Council and the existence of that group made it almost impossible for the Soviet Union, if we planned it right, to veto. We pretty much cornered the Soviets into silence. First of all the Soviets could never oppose an effort designed to bring freedom and independence to an African country, especially when African countries supported that effort. We just never made them a part of the process. But since the diplomacy was centered on the Security Council - we labeled the five countries the "contact group" - and almost all of the diplomatic work was in the UN context. Almost everyone conceded that Namibia was in a sense a ward of the United Nations that South Africa never recognized, and there was a long history in the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council adopting resolutions and taking a position regarding the illegality of South Africa's continuing occupation of the

country. I recall there also was a UN commission that was designated by the General Assembly in effect as “in loco parentis” to Namibia.

No one, not even South Africa, contested that the UN was a proper forum for consideration of the issue. We sought to take advantage of a lot of developments at that time, including a U.S. administration that was sympathetic to Africa, and, together with the governments of others in the “contact group,” welcomed the challenge that Namibia presented and believed it was susceptible to solution. We figured also that with those five western countries working together, united in their diplomacy, South Africa would have to take it quite seriously. After all, South Africa considered itself as “western” and part of the “free world.” Who better spoke for the free world than the countries of the contact group and who better than these five collectively to tell the South Africans that they didn’t measure up. I would add that in my quite considerable experience by that time, I had never known countries to work as closely and as harmoniously as did those five. It proved for three years, I think, quite an effective instrument for bringing about what eventually resulted in independence for Namibia. It shows what leadership can do. There was another element to our thinking, if not our formal strategy, about which I felt strongly, as did Don McHenry. We knew there was no way at that time of attacking apartheid in South Africa directly. It was just too huge a problem with too much opposition to such a move, even in the United States. But bringing independence to Namibia, with a black majority government, we felt would signal to South Africans, black and white, that they’re next. I think the South African Government concluded the same thing once the Namibia initiative developed momentum, which may have been the reason why South Africa at the end of the day opposed the Namibian settlement in all kinds of different ways, including covert. But of course in the early ‘80’s Cuba and the whole Angola mess negated for a time what seemed to be South African concession to the Carter administration to let the plan be implemented. But maybe the South Africans at that point saw the end of Jimmy Carter and felt they’d get a better deal under Ronald Reagan, which for a while they did.

*Q: It looked that way.*

HELMAN: You had this new administration, the Reagan administration, coming in with senior people who really believed that South Africa was a threatened by communism and was critical to the West. I think you also had residual discriminatory attitudes towards blacks.

*Q: During the Carter period were you still seeing this idea that somehow or another the Soviet Union, through the surrogate...Cuba was really somehow going to take over Africa?*

HELMAN: No, that was not an issue for most of the Carter administration. I think we probably would’ve found it hard to believe. If Cuba made headway it was because the West was not addressing Africa’s real problems. So you had a highly unstable situation in which the Soviet Union, Cuba, or others would happily play. They could and did deliver

some useful skills such as medical assistance. To governments in peril they could provide military assistance and troops. In retrospect it seems extraordinary that the Cubans were willing to do the Soviet bidding on this. Cuba proved to be a pretty useful surrogate for the Soviets. But this was I think after my period of involvement.

*Q: When you had the contact group and all, I think one of the remarkable things was France was part of it and France so often, in our terms, got off the reservation. Was this a problem of keeping them on a reservation or were they really part of the process?*

HELMAN: No, they were a part of the process. Since I had so much experience in NATO I knew well how difficult the French could be. I found that they played a pretty constructive role on the whole. Occasionally they were difficult, but by and large it was a good relationship. I suspect that they decided the best way of dealing with the head of the Namibian guerrilla movement, Sam Nujoma, was to buy him off, which I think they tried to do.

*Q: (laughs) Well, this is always nice to have French who don't get too upset about that sort of thing. You just turned your face away.*

HELMAN: It was really quite extraordinary. You had the foreign ministers of the five countries in the contact group meeting in New York, working on issues, with jointly prepared papers for them; you had Pic Botha meeting with them and giving something...

*Q: He was the foreign minister...*

HELMAN: The foreign minister of South Africa. And getting himself beaten up by the five western foreign ministers. One time I remember I was sitting with Don Pederson in an anteroom to where the Ministers were meeting at the US Mission in New York - I wasn't in the meeting- and heard the door of the meeting room open and Botha and his staff just tearing out of there - he's a big guy - just outraged, which was kind of extraordinary. He came back but he was showing that he was not going to be intimidated. But they intimidated him. As a sidelight, I think that one of the attractions for the South Africans of these negotiations was that it brought them into legitimate company, operating in the United Nations. They had always been treated as the skunk at the picnic; now there was a prospect of being seated at the table. The Namibia settlement did lead to their full membership in the UN even before the collapse of apartheid.

*Q: (laughs) Well, turning to the Middle East, how did the Camp David accords play from your perspective of the United Nations?*

HELMAN: I got involved in one corner of it but it didn't much involve the United Nations except in setting up some of the peacekeeping arrangements in the implementation of the agreements. I remember one issue that came up - the Egyptians were insistent, for appearances sake, that the United Nations be seen to have played a role in the accords. So I was asked to find out whether we can fly the UN flag at Camp David

or the Blair House or at the final signing ceremonies and so on. I think Sadat particularly wanted to have the UN flag. I called up to the UN in New York and the answer was, "There are no rules; you want to fly the bloody flag, fly the flag." They don't care. *(laughs)* So we flew the UN flag at Blair House and elsewhere. But there were a number of other arrangements on the peacekeeping side that involved the Egyptians and the Israelis and so I got in on the latter part of the negotiation, the Blair House part of it, not the Camp David part of it. I worked with my colleagues from the Middle East Bureau, with the Egyptians and so on. That was a thrilling event.

*Q: Starting with Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, that must've sent shivers up and down everyone's spine.*

HELMAN: Yes. Great event, courageous initiative.

*Q: Was that a surprise?*

HELMAN: Yes I think it was as much a surprise to us as it certainly was to the Israelis. *(laughs)* It's important to give a lot of credit to Sadat, but also to Menachem Begin. Given his background and political position, Begin deserves real credit and Jimmy Carter very much so. And I would say that one of the most exciting events in which I've ever participated was the signing ceremony - again, having sneaked in on the tail-end of the whole operation. My wife and I picked up the bennies of invitations to the various White House events. It was a huge achievement for American diplomacy; there have not been many equal to it.

*Q: Were we sort of within the Foreign Service milieu, thinking that eventually there's going to be an independent Palestine at that time?*

HELMAN: When I was involved in the late '70s, early '80s, I don't think we really had reached that point in our thinking. I suppose if somebody had pressed me I would've said, well, yes. You could see it actually in the Camp David agreements where some of the associated documents had provisions regarding future dealings with the Palestinians, as I recall.

*Q: In a way nobody was looking towards the end game, which we're still looking towards now. (laughs)*

HELMAN: Well, we're still looking, but in a sense the last Camp David talks under President Clinton, plus...

*Q: These were in 2000.*

HELMAN: Yes, these were in 2000. Those talks, their results, and those conducted subsequently at Tabah between the Palestinians and the Israelis showed lots of promise, as do some recent developments in which it's taken for granted there would be a

Palestinian state. Even Israel has acknowledged that, although their conditions and timetable I'm sure would be a lot different than those of the Palestinians. I think two states are now accepted, and retrospectively it's hard to see how that could work out any differently given the nature of politics and the way peoples organize themselves. If Bosnians and Kosovars can have own independence, then why can't Palestinians? There's another angle to all of this that the Palestinians and the Arab governments must confront. They can't have it both ways, that is, they can't make correct formal statements to us and western governments regarding Israel and at the same time allow their children to be taught hatred for Israelis and Jews generally and treat Israel as that "Zionist entity."

*Q: Did you find from the perspective of IO that in some ways you had a much broader perspective of how things were going than say a geographic bureau and all? Were you bringing something to the table of that nature?*

HELMAN: I think so, to the extent that a fair amount of...let me put it this way - when you serve overseas in another country you begin recognizing that by and large developments in the United Nations receive much more attention in the press and public opinion than the developments do in the United States. The United Nations, to the average, even well-read, attentive American is a sideshow, occasionally cropping up, usually for the worse rather than for the better. It's not true around the world. A lot of countries see a good bit of their diplomacy as being conducted in the United Nations. As a matter of fact, probably most countries wouldn't have a diplomacy much beyond the countries bordering them, were it not for the fact of the United Nations and the global perspective that that creates for them. So someone dealing in IO, political affairs particularly, will have a much broader perspective and will understand precedents a bit better in terms of how it's handled in one case and another case and so on. In addition, to put together a majority on an important resolution, someone in UNP often has to craft a message that plays to national and regional sensibilities across the board. You don't want a position that while it goes down well with some, risks offending others. That being said, to the extent that an issue genuinely impacts on a significant bilateral relationship, the regional bureau is going to call the shots.

I think that there's been one other development that we've seen over the course of the past couple of decades; that is, that so many of the issues in the world are definable only as multilateral issues and can be dealt only on a multilateral basis. They simply involve many more than one country and generally more than one region. You're talking about whaling and you're talking about environment or health issues or AIDS or terrorism, outer space, telecommunications, even matters involving war or peace. The older Bush properly went to the Security Council for endorsement of his plans with respect to Kuwait and Bush Jr. did the same on terrorism. It's easy to forget that the authority that is given to the Security Council by the United Nations Charter, which is after all a treaty, is huge. If a country, the United States, wants legitimacy in its use of force, even when we are the victim of a horrible attack such as what happened on 9/11, it goes to the Security Council.

*Q: One of the things that is always noted is that at a certain point in almost any*

*international thing where it requires intervention or intense involvement, they're always talking about UN Resolution - whatever the number is; it's always used as sort of the final justification.*

HELMAN: Sure. It provides legitimacy, and under certain circumstances the Security Council can organize peacekeeping or peace-enforcing forces as it has in the last dozen or so years.

*Q: During your time what was the feeling towards peacekeeping? Was this something we were basically beginning to rev up or shy away from?*

HELMAN: We were generally quite supportive of it. We never got into Chapter VII, which authorizes the use of offensive force; it was always sort of Chapter VI or Chapter VI ½ - this is of the UN Charter. But in my time on UN matters, peacekeeping was looked upon as, in many cases, a very effective way of dealing with situations which did not require military intimidation - in other words, going in and taking an objective by the use of military force. The UN never undertook that kind of role on my watch. The use of force under Chapter 7 was authorized a number of times over the past decade or so, most notably against Iraq in Kuwait, against terrorism and in several other situations. Short of that, peacekeeping forces can serve a number of important objectives; as observers to monitor implementation of an agreement; to interpose the UN between contending forces along a contested frontier; policing the implementation of cease fire agreements and as police forces, where local institutions have broken down.

Keep in mind also that the United States was very influential in how peacekeeping operations were organized and conducted. Up until the '80s, we provided not only much of the logistic support without all this rigamoral that goes on now where we charge the United Nations three times as much as it costs to fly a soldier. Or equipment; a lot of UN peacekeeping operations were run on American equipment. Now this was obviously an expense to the United States but it brought with it influence and control without committing troops. American civilians, employees of the United Nations, were deeply involved in these peacekeeping operations on the UN side and they worked closely with our military logistic people to make sure that the equipment got there and that it was the right kind and it was used properly and so on. So the U.S. had huge influence on the day to day conduct of these peacekeeping operations even if US forces were not on the ground - all to our benefit and all of it really quite quietly done. Unfortunately I think we've lost a lot of that influence and control..

*Q: At that time, and still I guess it remains the same, was the United States about the only country that could really deliver troops to a place?*

HELMAN: Pretty much. Certainly by air; on an emergency basis we were the only ones, as we are the only ones now as well. Follow-on resupply, for example,, could move by ship. Our help wasn't needed.in that case.

*Q: On the administrative side was there a battle trying to get the UN to...this has been one of the battle cries, particularly of the conservatives, but Americans in general have felt that the UN bureaucracy isn't the greatest in the world and some of the people are living pretty high off the hog. Money is not well spent.*

HELMAN: Well, I don't know anybody who is living high off the hog. I think that's a bad rap. It may have been an issue that Bill Maynes had to worry about, I didn't. I frankly thought, and I still think, that these complaints are overdone. Everybody else's bureaucracy is inefficient, your own of course is perfect. I've never seen a bureaucracy, public or private, that can document efficiency; if you want to see bloated bureaucracy you should see some in the large private companies I have dealt with since leaving the Service. Really bad. Hell, look at the U.S. intelligence bureaucracy and its intelligence failure prior to 9/11. I'll wager that protecting bureaucratic turf took precedence over monitoring and analyzing terrorism. So I've always felt that much of the criticism - not that the UN can claim bureaucratic efficiency and I suspect that I could probably cite more areas of inefficiency than most. But by and large the UN is no more inefficient than other bureaucracies I've seen. In some areas they were really quite competent, such as in peacekeeping, and worked very hard. A claim that the World Health Organization or the International Telecommunication Union is inefficient is simply not serious. And I thought the whole business of efficiency, or lack thereof, was an excuse which people who for one reason or another didn't like the UN or didn't like the U.S. to play a role in it, relied on the tack of inefficiency to undermine the United Nations.

*Q: The recognition and...it was during your watch that mainland China took its seat?*

HELMAN: Probably, but that must've come...

*Q: It almost happened...*

HELMAN: Didn't it happen under Gerry Ford?

*Q: No it didn't because Carter recognized China as such.*

HELMAN: Then it would have, yes.

*Q: I was just wondering.*

HELMAN: It was no big deal.

*Q: It no longer became...it was just a matter of accepting this, at least from your perspective, it wasn't...*

HELMAN: No big deal. Of course on the Security Council you had another communist country with veto power, but that no longer seemed to be the threat that it did ten years before.

*Q: How did you find recruitment from IO - from the officer pool of people who were ready to be assigned there, did you feel you got good officers? Was it competitive?*

HELMAN: Oh, yes. We had superb people. We had guys like Tom Niles, Dan Kurtzer, Bob Barry, later our Ambassador to Indonesia. Dan was our Ambassador in Egypt and now in Israel. But we had no real trouble recruiting some great talent. It was well understood that the Carter Administration saw advantage to pursuing our diplomacy in a UN context. After all we were dealing with political affairs; it's another perspective on political affairs. I think good Foreign Service officers recognized that these issues are of concern to countries in which they have or they'll be going to serve. Some of the other offices in IO had a good deal more trouble recruiting and retaining good people, largely because the issues involved were economic and social. It's less engaging than political affairs. I was very pleased at the quality of people that we picked up and I think part of it was due to Bill Maynes, and I hope I had some role in it, too.

*Q: We'll pick this up the next time in 1979, which was a rather exciting year as far as Afghanistan and Iran and all that, blew up. You were out of IO by that time, weren't you?*

HELMAN: By mid-year I was designated for Geneva.

*Q: As what?*

HELMAN: As ambassador.

*Q: To do what?*

HELMAN: Permanent representative to United Nations offices in Europe, which is headquartered in Geneva and carried the rank of ambassador.

*Q: So we'll pick this up '79 to when?*

HELMAN: '79 to late '81.

*Q: Gerry, how did you get your job going to Geneva?*

HELMAN: With great difficulty. *(laughs)* In fact I was really quite surprised and pleased I had been offered the job because up until then I think without exception Geneva went only to political appointees. My predecessor, Bill Vandenheuval was really quite qualified and had a lot of domestic political experience through the Kennedy family. I attribute the fact that I got the job to three people - one is Cyrus Vance and the others Don McHenry and Bill Maynes. Don McHenry at that time had succeeded Andy Young as our perm. rep. in New York and Don and I for years had been very close and dear friends and professional colleagues. He and Bill pushed for my designation as permanent representative in Geneva because they felt that the U.S. could gain a great deal through



professional management of that post. They supported it; it was not uncontested because the political types in the White House, of course, asked why should this guy, Helman, get this kind of job which has always been considered a plum? What did he do to be that deserving? But fortunately I had sufficient backing and the president agreed and I was designated. Passed my confirmation hearings and so on and went on to Geneva.

*Q: At that time, because these things always change, how was the job described and how did you see your job and what you were going to be doing when you went out there?*

HELMAN: Well, I must confess I was a bit surprised that I was asked to take the job because while I was quite experienced in United Nations affairs, that experience had been almost exclusively in the area of political Affairs, the activities that went on in New York principally, rather than in Geneva. Geneva was the home of the economic and social and humanitarian activities of the United Nations and I had precious little experience with organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), and so on and so on. These and others turned out to be fascinating organizations, including the office of the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Human Rights Commission. Because of these various specialized agencies. The UN has a significantly larger staff in Geneva than New York. But I knew very little about those organizations so I was a bit surprised and I honestly did not know quite what to expect.

My strengths lay at that time in a knowledge of political affairs, which as it turned out did intrude on those organizations; a good sense of how the State Department worked, a good feel for multilateral and conference diplomacy and how the U.S. could best obtain its objectives in a multilateral forum. But that being said, and puzzled as I was, I was also quite happy because it turned out to be a great experience.

*Q: Did you go out with any sort of preconceived agenda in your briefcase?*

HELMAN: Yes I did. And it was a strategic one or a conceptual one rather than an issue-specific one. Up until I think I went there, the Geneva Mission was generally considered to be a facilitator, a hotel management entity for various U.S. delegations coming to Geneva. It was heavy on the administrative side and it was not expected to participate much at all in the actual substantive work of these organizations. I was supported by Bill Maynes and Don McHenry in particular, and I figured it's time to change this, that there are too many important things that go on in Geneva, including - while this wasn't part of my direct responsibility - trade negotiations in the context of the GATT. Various arms control activities were also conducted in Geneva.

Different parts of our government were responsible for our participation in various of the Geneva-based organizations and activities, for example the Trade Rep for GATT, the Department of Labor for the ILO, Department of Health for the WHO, the FCC and Commerce for the ITU, ACDA for arms control, and so it went. The Geneva Mission

could never provide the necessary technical expertise. What it could do was to monitor these organizations between major conferences, establish close ties with their leadership, who often controlled large budgets, and provide the political and multilateral expertise needed to achieve our objectives in conferences and meetings. In addition, I decided that I was going to train myself in the programs and activities of these various specialized agencies, as they were called, and try and figure out how the U.S. could best reach its goals. By the way, each of those organizations had its own culture, structure, method of operation and decision-making. Most were established by treaties separate from the UN Charter. I also had the opportunity of selecting my DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) and I chose Don Eller, whom I had gotten to know in IO and who I considered the best admin.officer I had ever run across. He certainly validated my opinion of him through his performance in Geneva. Don unfortunately is since deceased, but we went together to Geneva. His job was to take care of the complex administration, not only of the mission, which was fairly sizeable and moving into a brand new building of its own.

*Q: I don't mean this to be facetious at all, quite seriously, part of that hotel management thing you were talking about which can get extremely complex having delegation after delegation coming in, needing to be housed, fed, and served for whatever their purpose is.*

HELMAN: That's right. Don knows that I would make the decisions that had to be made but I relied on him heavily to just manage all of that so that I could free myself to work with the various delegations, with the heads of all these agencies and so on. And I thought it turned out to be - well certainly my relationship with Don was very close and I hope it achieved what I sought to achieve.

*Q: When you got out there did you find there was a distinct culture, either for the whole mission, or did each separate entity, which are quite different from each other, have its own culture and sort difficult to understand it, to break into it and all that?*

HELMAN: Not in quite that way. There was a cultural issue there. I worked hard in my first couple of months at the mission, which was complicated by the fact that we moved from the old mission which was a couple of floors in an office building in Geneva to a spectacular building - one of the nicest structures I've seen the U.S. government put up - on the outskirts of Geneva near the UN complex. So that move was really time consuming and distracting. But I tried very hard to develop a core team with which I worked from the mission. I wanted them to buy into my concept of how we should function, which was that for each delegation - and the delegations were numerous and large - we would, I would, serve not only on that delegation together with some of the people in the mission who were expert in the work of that particular specialized agency, but that we would let the people coming from Washington know that we could deal with the complicated political and multilateral problems that came up. We didn't put ourselves out as experts on technical telecommunications issues, or the details of labor law, or the details of health problems and so on, but when it came to our working with these specialized agencies directly or working as part of the U.S. delegation in the annual

conferences that these agencies sponsored, we knew how to get things done.

*Q: How did you find this concept dealt with the delegations that came?*

HELMAN: Really quite good. Not to make invidious comparisons but they were habitually looking at the U.S. mission as basically a hotel management operation and I think they were willing to acknowledge that my background, and with the expertise that I had worked to develop within the mission, we could contribute significantly to the work of a particular delegation and we could tend their special interests in these agencies in between the various conferences. It worked out well. I and my people had the experience and contacts in the UN bureaucracy and with other Missions necessary to devise and implement the tactics to achieve our substantive objectives.

The other element of it that reinforced what I was trying to do is the deference that a Presidential ambassadorial appointee commands. Even though some of the people who came with our delegations were quite senior and often Cabinet members, they were respectful, they saw what I could do for them. The Residence was a great help here - we had a marvelous residence - and we would hold cocktail parties, dinners, and whatnot, in order to further the work of each particular delegation. My wife had put together an outstanding staff and figured out how to do marvelous entertainments at short notice and on budget. She should have gotten paid.

There were structural and even cultural differences between various of the specialized agencies. For example, the International Labor Organization, created at the close of World War I by the Treaty of Versailles, had an elaborate constitutional structure and, uniquely, tripartite participation, representing labor, business and government - and they voted independently. I used to get Lane Kirkland and Irving Brown and other senior members of our labor movement over plus senior corporate executives representing business voting business interests. Delightful. I mean it was a great deal of fun working with these people. By the way, these labor relationships persisted even after I left Geneva, when I worked for the Under Secretary. For annual meetings of the World Health Organization, I'd get the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare coming over to head the delegation. Most of the issues, of course were a lot different than those in the ILO. Procedures, conference structure and overall ambiance varied considerably by organization. But the usual Arab-Israeli questions bedeviled everybody and our delegates from Washington were really quite happy to have me take it off their shoulders. They were content to have me speak as ambassador and who seemed to know what he was doing in dealing with extraneous political issues such the Arab-Israel dispute.

One time I stepped in to take responsibility for implementing the U.S. position on a controversial technical issue. The U.S. position was controversial and embarrassing to our health professionals. It involved the use of infant formula instead of breast milk in poor countries. The U.S. position under Carter was to favor breast feeding. It switched under Reagan. I announced and justified the U.S. position, which happily was very much in the minority. I guess that's what professionals are for. I several times took the pain and strain

off the hands of our experts, delivered the harsh message on behalf of the U.S. government and let the experts take it from there.

There were more political questions involved in my work in Geneva than I had anticipated before coming out there. The Human Rights Commission, for example, met there annually and it still meets there and it's still highly contentious, highly political. The U.S. government would send very capable delegations but they suffered from the fact that each time it was generally a new bunch of people, so all needed orientation and education and help and so on. An amusing sideline: the head of my household staff told me that the human rights types ate and drank more, and stayed longer at my cocktail parties than any other group.

I should add that another surprise to me was the range, commitment and energy of the various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) that followed the work of various of the specialized agencies. They mainly were active in the field of human rights and humanitarian affairs, but also had a point of view on what was going on in other of the Agencies, such as the WHO. And they let me know their views. They are, by and large, remarkable outfits and a powerful lobbying force in many countries. They are more widely appreciated and reported on today; I learned about them and their quite significant role when I was in Geneva.

*Q: Within your core mission, if you want to keep up with political things you must've had some people who were reading the cables and were...*

HELMAN: Oh, yes. Including me. *(laughs)* I read the cables.

*Q: But you must've had the equivalent of a political advisory section to understand what the issues were. Did you have that type of thing?*

HELMAN: Yes, I had a small political section, a somewhat larger economic section because it had the several economic entities, specialized agencies including the UN Committee on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which was sometimes a bloody pain in the neck.

*Q: This was doing what?*

HELMAN: UNCTAD was set up by the United Nations back I think in the early '50s. Its principal purpose was to try and promote economic development, particularly of developing countries, and they used to develop lengthy studies and resolutions and to describe and recommend various measures and methodologies to assist developing countries. It was a fairly sizeable specialized agency by the time I got there that produced a lot of paper, sponsored endless meetings but never seemed to do anything useful. There probably were more than a dozen specialized agencies; each one required separate handling because each one was unique and operated on unique charters. Some of them were remarkably effective and often were not well known. As I mentioned earlier, I was

much taken by the ILO, which I found a fascinating organization in its structure and performance. For example, a wide variety of human rights conventions were developed under its auspices. They dealt with a variety of labor issues, including child and slave labor. It sought thereby to establish global, uniform standards. Back in the '30s, the ILO helped the US to develop its Social Security System. More recently, the ILO helped Poland write new labor legislation in the aftermath of Solidarity's success. By the way, most UN specialized agencies, with some exceptions, were set up post World War II. But the International Labor Organization goes back to the Treaty of Versailles; the International Telecommunication Union goes back to Alexander Graham Bell. Along time ago. So these have their own particular histories.

I found the Human Rights Commission quite challenging and quite difficult, quite discouraging sometimes. Then, as now, the countries with serious human rights problems lobbied to be elected to the Commission so that they could prevent any action against them. I found the UN High Commission for Refugees a fascinating organization - had a great deal to do with them. During my stay there the work multiplied immensely, in part because global developments beyond anybody's expectation resulted in a huge growth in refugee populations. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) I also found a remarkable organization. Of course, the ICRC was a private Swiss foundation, not a multinational organization, but the U.S. was a major contributor and welcomed its participation in dealing with man-made disasters worldwide. The ICRC's leadership was always available to me to discuss issues and operations. Quite an extraordinary organization. I should here distinguish between the ICRC and the League of Red Cross Societies, also with its headquarters in Geneva. The American Red Cross is an affiliate of the League, not the ICRC, and is concerned largely with providing aid in natural disasters.

*Q: What about the other major powers - the Soviets, the British, the French, Japan? Did they have comparable organizations such as yours?*

HELMAN: Yes, they were really quite well represented. The French had a smaller mission but then again they always have a small embassy and small missions. But they sent really top-notch people, the British, as well. And their ambassadors were guys with whom I closely cooperated. Japan was a bit more remote but still an important participant. The Japanese normally are reticent. When I was there the Chinese first came on in a significant fashion; they had by then joined the Security Council and they were gradually learning how to participate and learning - I use the term advisedly - to participate in international organizations more broadly, because they were terribly inexperienced, terribly fumbling.

*Q: You were saying you got to know the...*

HELMAN: I had a good working relationship with the Chinese ambassador because he sought, obviously for his own reasons, some help in how to participate. He literally sought my guidance. My instructions were to go ahead and help him as long as I was not giving away the store. That proved to be a valuable way of getting Chinese support when

I needed it.

Another relationship which developed quite encouragingly as a consequence of outside events was with the Egyptian ambassador; Rauf el Reedy, who subsequently became Egypt's ambassador to the United States. This was in the wake of the Camp David accords and so our relationship with Egypt was certainly on a new level. Having recognized and established diplomatic relations with Israel, they couldn't contribute to the kind of political harassment of Israel that had become standard fare for Arab countries in the UN system. I was able to work with el Reedy closely to discourage and circumvent or defeat such harassment.

Basically my purpose was to save the UN institutions from the distractions of having to deal with political issues that really didn't belong there, and certainly my ability to work closely with a very talented Egyptian ambassador and his staff made my job in that respect quite a bit easier. I also established what continues to be a good friendship with el Reedy. I should add, while giving a general account of Geneva, that it was the scene of many ad hoc diplomatic activities.

*Q: A neutral, nice environment.*

HELMAN: An absolutely nice environment. Geneva always offers a very desirable alternative. And the Genevois certainly encouraged that. So there were a variety of off-the-record diplomatic activities that went on there. To illustrate that about all I can say is that there is a plaque in the lobby of a mission, which I think was awarded to two or three embassies around the world, commending us for our assistance in the Iran hostage crisis. And that was of course extremely gratifying to our entire Mission staff.

*Q: How did that play? We had two things going on at the same time, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iran hostage crisis. I imagine the hostage crisis particularly engaged us, didn't it?*

HELMAN: Yes, the hostage crisis was preeminent; there were some off-the-record activities that involved Afghanistan, but diplomacy with respect to Afghanistan had not really taken hold. This was something that developed several years afterwards. But the activities on a variety of other issues were certainly parts of my portfolio.

*Q: On the Iran hostage thing I imagine there were all sorts of...I mean this was sort of a meeting informal sub rosa a meeting place for various negotiations or discussions.*

HELMAN: I'll pass on that, but needless to say we were pleased to receive a commendation.

*Q: Were some of the age-old diplomatic games played out on these delegations? I think of the perpetual one between the French and the Americans, particularly from our perspective of the French trying to stick their thumb in our eyes and all.*

HELMAN: Sometimes on the economic side, but the French had quite a remarkable Ambassador, Stefan Hessel, who had no patience for that kind of activity. He was quite senior in the French diplomatic service and thus not easily challengeable from home. You always expected the French to give you a hard time of it, but it didn't happen very much in Geneva. The French, certainly on refugee matters and human rights matters were team players; we were pretty much working off the same page. My French counterpart could call me and I would give him a hand if I could possibly do that and I was pretty confident that if I gave him a ring he would similarly respond. My British counterpart certainly was of the same mind. It was a really pleasant experience. We all cooperated on substantive but also budgetary issues. When we called as a team on Agency heads to discuss money, for example, we were quite formidable. How much was a product of my skills, or lack of them, is not very relevant. But I know that they were very pleased to have, for the first time, an American colleague who was a pro, who knew the policy, who knew the business, and with whom they could work and who would understand what they were driving at. By the way, and also whom they couldn't take for a ride. *(laughs)* And they knew that.

*Q: How did you find being separated from the UN headquarters? Sometimes this is quite a joy to be away. You know, it's a large bureaucracy.*

HELMAN: Geneva, by the way, has more UN employees than New York. Our contributions to the Geneva based agencies, was larger than our contributions to the New York agencies, so I had plenty of bureaucracy. And one of the things that I undertook was to try my damndest to place U.S. nationals on the staffs of the various UN agencies. Other countries generally do a much better job, I think even today, than the U.S. has done in making sure that we get our fair share of jobs. Not that the U.S. nationals who were employed there, in the bureaucracies there, were at my beck and call, but there was a matter of fairness, of confidence in the competence of the U.S. nationals, and insistence on my part that we get our fair share.

I also tried to pay closer attention to them - there were hundreds of U.S. employees in the UN agencies in Geneva. None of them had ever seen the inside of the mission, certainly few had seen the inside of the Residence; only a few had ever met the U.S. ambassador there, or staff and stuff like that, and I thought that that was wrong so I tried hard to at least make them feel a part of the larger community so that they would know that we're there, we're on their side, we want to meet them, talk to them, work with them, and even deal with their grievances. I thought that worked out well.

*Q: How did you find the Swiss as hosts?*

HELMAN: Oh, pretty good. *(laughs)* The Swiss are remarkable. Better, the "Genevois" because the Swiss canton system is real and they have every bit as much pride in their identity as "Genevois," or coming from one of the other cantons, as a Texan has of being from Texas and so on. Genevois recall that Geneva was once an independent entity that

predated the Swiss Confederation and had very much a history all of its own. And indeed Geneva has a fascinating history. So when you dealt with the Swiss, you were really dealing with the Genevois, and they attach a great deal of importance, both politically and economically, to the presence of the UN entities in Geneva and in Switzerland despite the fact that up until recently Switzerland was not a member of the United Nations, or at least of its political organs. It was a member of many of the specialized agencies and contributed a good bit of money to their operations.

I learned about at least one attraction that the Genevois and the Swiss employed to maintain their attraction to UN agencies; if, let's say, the International Labor Organization decides it's outgrown its old building, doesn't have enough land, wants to build something and is sort of looking around generally, even outside of Switzerland, the Swiss will make them an offer they can't refuse. (*laughs*) It might involve loaning them money to build a new building, charging almost 0% interest. And so the ILO stays there and others stay there as well.

*Q: While you were there were there any issues that you can talk about that you found particularly difficult, engaging, and contentious?*

HELMAN: Yes, I think the area that engaged me more than any other single one was refugee affairs - humanitarian affairs generally, but specifically refugee affairs. At the time I was there, Saddrudin Aga Khan, who did an outstanding job as High Commissioner for Refugees, had left post. He was a Prince of the Islamic Ismaeli sect and lived in a gorgeous villa right on the shore of Lake Geneva. Paol Hartling, who at various times had been foreign minister and premier of Denmark, was elected as his replacement. Saddrudin's job when he was High Commissioner involved a world-wide effort to help with scattered refugee populations. It involved persons who had been involuntarily and forcefully displaced from their country - essentially "true" refugees, instead of persons internally displaced because of drought, famine and civil war. While the organization had a large budget, its operations were generally predictable and manageable.

That changed rapidly when Hartling came on board, not because he invited the change but because of events around the world. Civil conflict, drought and famine created huge populations of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. And then you had the whole Cambodia refugee problem - that was when Pol Pot came on the scene and a real holocaust began there - and the Vietnamese invasion and the terrible, terrible suffering and decimation of the Cambodian populations and the wandering, almost uncountable number of Cambodians and the desperate efforts to provide somehow for these refugee populations in a very dangerous environment. All told we were talking about many millions of helpless people. And the difficulty of it was intensified by the terrain, the politics, and the sheer physical danger - the Pol Pot people did not welcome visitors (*laughs*) and the Vietnamese could also be difficult. It's strange to think that the Vietnamese could be at that time viewed as almost rescuers.

*Q: This was really not that long after the war. Were we making contacts with the*



*Vietnamese? They were really coming in to stop this. The fact that they were coming in was...*

HELMAN: Since I was not involved directly in the bilateral aspect of it, I think the answer was, not really. In part because it was not really clear what the Vietnamese objectives were, although certainly anybody that took on Pol Pot was more than welcome in my mind. And you had the boat people issue and so on. It was just a horrible, horrible situation. Between Cambodia and Africa, the UNHCR's resources were almost overwhelmed. The UNHCR was trying to develop some sort of plan with a Thailand that wasn't always terribly cooperative and with Washington which was intent on assuring in that the proper procedures were maintained in delivering refugee assistance - financial assistance, food, anything.

In working with Harting and a number of other quite remarkable people, and I think in many respects the most remarkable of all was Mort Abramowitz - who I knew before this as a colleague. He was, fortunately, our ambassador in Thailand and was quite willing to go to the mat on the refugee issue with Washington. Mort came up with the, at that time, radical and extraordinary idea, saying, "So what if the food gets in the hands of black marketeers? Dump the food at the frontier if necessary and even if it gets in the black market, all the black marketeers can do is sell to people who are willing to pay for it and so you feed people." He bullied State and the Thais, until they did the right thing. *(laughs)* Certainly I bought into it and Mort came over once or twice to Geneva. We helped put together an international emergency conference to raise money, consolidate political support, and help organize the UNHCR, the ICRC and other humanitarian agencies to tackle the crisis in a coherent, organized fashion. We also worked together to organize the UNHCR operation in Thailand. Mort was the inspiration and the engine that drove the process. Help was given and gotten. Another remarkable person who played a key role was Sir Robert Jackson, "Jacko" was Australian, with a military background and served as Harting's Coordinator for Cambodia. Jacko was experienced in UN and military operations. He was unorthodox, profane and totally dedicated. His wife, by the way, was Barbara Ward Jackson, the very formidable author, journalist and, as I recall, editor of the "Economist."

The other principal effort in the refugee field involved Africa, which was being overwhelmed by war and draught induced-famine. Organizing a special contributors' conference to wheedle large amounts of money out of donating governments for the High Commissioner to use in providing assistance to the African refugees, was a major effort. It was major in terms of timing because there was present disaster that one was trying to confront. The bureaucracies in Geneva and Washington had great difficulty in addressing the really quite extraordinary events and numbers of people involved. I did a lot of pushing on that and so did the State Department. For the conference, Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher came over and Dick Holbrook came over as well.

*Q: He was secretary for Far Eastern Affairs which is where a significant number of refugees...*

HELMAN: You are right, but I'm sure Dick was on that trip. He probably took on some Cambodian and Asian issues on the side. The event was successful in raising money but, as importantly, in helping the UNHCR to organize itself to cope with its quite huge problem. Subsequent to that I was at lunch at the Thai ambassador's residence and Paol Hartling was there, the High Commissioner for Refugees, and a bunch of other ambassadors, and it was then that Paol was called to the phone. It was the Nobel Committee calling to inform him that the UNHCR had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. That was terrific.

*Q: Oh, yes. Did you find that the Scandinavians were playing a particular role in this, because although they were both in and out of NATO - Sweden being out of NATO and all - but they took a particular interest in places like Africa and humanitarian affairs. Did you find that they had a positive thrust?*

HELMAN: Oh, yes. UN affairs, in particular. When I was in Geneva, three heads of agencies were Danish nationals. One was Paol Hartling, High Commissioner for Refugees, another was Hafdan Mahler, who was head of the World Health Organization. He was superb. He was a tough bureaucrat; he managed that place far better than some of the people who succeeded him. And then the head of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which is a very large organization, was also Danish. I don't recall his name. But one thing I learned, though I didn't deal much with the WMO, they are the largest consumer of computer capacity in the world. Apparently, following and predicting the weather requires huge, huge time on very heavy duty systems.

*Q: They still haven't found the philosopher's stone. I mean at least they keep saying when there's going to be rain in Annandale and they've been off almost every time.*

HELMAN: Well, they haven't gotten it down to that fine a grain. *(laughs)* I'll tell you though, the WMO provides immense amounts of data to its U.S. counterparts, and around the world. Farmers can be very happy with what these guys do.

*Q: Satellites, by the time you were there in 1980 or so, were beginning to kick in with all of their data that they could have - crops and...*

HELMAN: That's taking pictures and observation satellites. Yes, that's true. That provided a great deal of assistance in predicting weather. But the heavy duty computer demand was based upon just raw data, not pictures, temperatures, events, amount of rain and cloud patterns, and sea patterns, and wind patterns. It was huge.

*Q: What about the role of the Soviets at this time? The Soviets were quite a bit in the international doghouse after their invasion of Afghanistan. Did that have any impact on operations in Geneva?*

HELMAN: Only in particular areas. The Soviets certainly had a large staff there, probably

for a number of reasons most spelled KGB. And they were most troublesome because they used their Geneva mission as a recruiting headquarters; they tried very hard both to place their own nationals and suborn other nationals who were on the staffs of the various UN agencies. I think just as in New York these multilateral institutions represented for the Soviets sort of a happy hunting ground for informants and more - both from the staffs of the UN entities there and from the various delegations to the United Nations, because Geneva and New York were two of the very few places where basically the whole world was represented and so you've got a large smorgasbord from which to dine. So that was troublesome and part of my work was to try and assist these specialized agencies in coming up with more efficient structures and to try and resist the politicization of their activities and the suborning of their staffs. Certainly I had good support from the heads of the various agencies, who knew what was going on, but that was always a significant part of my portfolio. Others at my mission who were more expert at these matters than I dealt with them daily.

The Russians were active in arms control obviously. I didn't get into that very much. They were hardly active at all on the economic side of the picture. They were active in a variety of specialized agencies. Sometimes they were cooperative, sometimes they weren't. This was on the overt side. By and large, even though they had a large delegation, I don't think that they were very effective in pursuing their interests on the overt issues that arose in the various agencies. Since they contributed little money, few were inclined to pay attention to the Soviet view on questions of programs and agendas of the Agencies. They were increasingly on the defensive - not only because of Afghanistan, and that really wasn't terribly significant while I was there, except some of the Soviet nationals found it a little embarrassing, but because of events in Eastern Europe. That was the time of very significant political developments in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. These countries were looking for a freer hand. These countries used the United Nations, both in New York and Geneva, as fora in which they could seek wider scope for pursuing what they considered to be their national interests. And certainly it's something that I saw, perhaps not in terribly dramatic fashion, but sufficiently clearly so that I looked for ways to give them a hand to weaken the Soviet position if possible, and to seek support on particular issues of interest to us. But I never expected it to go terribly far.

There were, however, some very dramatic events. Geneva was almost a wonderland in some of the things that happened there, for example, at the 1981 International Labor Conference, which was the ILO's annual global conference. President Reagan had by then taken office and I forget the name of the secretary of labor who came. Anyway Lane Kirkland came over with a strong union team. Senator Hatch was there as ranking member of the Senate's Labor Committee.

But the big attraction at the Conference was the presence of Lech Walesa as the Polish worker representative. I believe it was the first time he had ever departed Poland. The Polish government allowed him to leave to represent Polish workers at the ILO. I can't begin to describe the electricity in that huge conference hall when Walesa rose to speak. It was great. *(laughs)* I recall standing at the side of the conference hall so that I could watch

the reactions of the Eastern Europeans. Almost all, including some Cubans, applauded Walesa.

*Q: When you were there were you seeing a growing importance where both - I'm not sure if it was the European Union or European community, probably at that point?*

HELMAN: It was a little more complex than that because you still had EFTA.

*Q: And that was when the OSCE was getting...Were you seeing sort of a coalescence within Europe of being a power unto itself or not?*

HELMAN: I think there was still a lot of stumbling and feeling for direction. As I said, the Europeans, unlike today, were split between two trading groups. One was the Common Market, then called, and the European Free Trade Association with Switzerland and the Scans generally and the Brits. I think the Irish and a bunch of others were members. It was a complicating factor because on anything of real significance, each entity went off by themselves and they tried to bargain amongst themselves on a position and finally they'd come around to tell you what their position was. This introduced a lot of rigidity in the negotiating process because none of them wanted to go back into their own groups for approval of changes. It was a complicating matter but not overwhelmingly so because on anything with any significance, you know the Germans or the British or the French or some of the others were quite willing to get together.

*Q: How was the advent of the Reagan administration seen from Geneva at the time?*

HELMAN: Great trepidation. Reagan came with a highly critical foreign and even US press. Whatever the press printed was mistaken as gospel, as true; and what the American press printed about Reagan and some of the people who came in with him - General Haig and Jeane Kirkpatrick was accepted and even devoured. It was seen most immediately in Geneva in the Human Rights Commission because the Human Rights Commission took up its usual array of high voltage issues in March, 1981. The Commission meeting goes on for six to eight bloody weeks and the U.S. government then would send over a couple of guys that I got to know - Dick Schifter and - who was the co-head of delegation? I forget. He's over at the American Enterprise Institute now.

But they came with rather a hard nose and idealistic approach to human rights. They both were neo-conservatives; they were part of the neo-con crowd in the Reagan administration. They were a lot tougher and a lot less willing to compromise and this made the task of getting general agreement very difficult on almost anything. I thought that in some cases they were unnecessarily rigid. So the first direct taste of the Reagan administration that the people in Geneva noticed was in the Human Rights Commission; it was a rather harder edged, less compromising approach, quite willing to take on issues that others felt uncomfortable with and so on. Not bad, but it was a change of pace into which people read all kinds of implications. Where it went badly awry was in the justification for supporting some pretty dreadful regimes, such as those in Argentina and

Chile. You may recall Jeane Kirkpatrick's article in, as I recall, Foreign Affairs - the one that supposedly brought her to the attention of the Reagan people. Her argument was roughly that in the battle against communism, it is better to put up with somewhat less than perfect regimes in Chile and Argentina. What a dreadful, morally perverse doctrine.

The event that I think was most difficult, and most embarrassing at the annual conference of the World Health Organization. And that is because one of the prominent issues at the World Health Assembly that year - the one that stuck out in my mind very much - was the question of breastfeeding. At that time a real controversy had arisen as to whether some of the large pharmaceutical companies, both Swiss and American, were being unethical in how they pushed artificial milk products, in Africa in particular, but also in South America, on populations that simply were incapable of employing them as directed or too poor really to afford them. It was felt by many that the pharmaceutical companies were trying to displace a far better and safer means of feeding infants, which is mother's milk, breastfeeding.

And what was happening, and quite purposefully on the part of the pharmaceutical companies, was that the pharmaceutical companies would go into the maternity wards in hospitals and hand out free samples of the stuff as the modern and easy alternative. You're not saddled with a child constantly at your breast and so on. It was attractive and it was free, at least initially and so it became the practice and was increasingly popular. What would happen is that when the free samples stopped and they had to go out to the store, they found they had to pay and so they started diluting the product with water out of the tap or out of the stream - and so they're feeding their infants a polluted product. Had that also in South America.

So there was a drive in the World Health Organization to admonish the pharmaceutical companies, and some of them took the point and behaved themselves, but unfortunately not the American pharmaceutical companies - at that time anyway - and to start a drive to encourage breastfeeding rather than substituting artificial products. Under the Carter administration the U.S. was supportive of this. The Reagan folks came in and they said no, this isn't the business of the World Health Organization and there's nothing wrong with artificial products; it's modern, it's healthy, and so on. And we don't want to get in the way of pharmaceutical companies pursuing quite legitimate business. So the U.S. official position changed and we went on aggressively to discourage mothers from feeding their infants. *(laughs)* You know, I recount that now and it was so ludicrous.

*Q: They've come up with studies that show women really should breastfeed their children for at least a year. There are all sorts of benefits, not just...*

HELMAN: There are all sorts of benefits. It's a cultural thing, it's an economic thing, and it's a health thing because in these countries diluting the product introduces a terrible danger.

*Q: And also there are so many other things that are much more nutritious anyway.*

*How about the Swiss, did they get involved? Because I think of Nestle.*

HELMAN: Nestle I think eventually backed off and behaved themselves. Nestle is very big and they're an industry leader.

*Q: They had been involved then in this, too, weren't they?*

HELMAN: Oh, yes, they were. They were certainly selling the substitute formula and pushing it but they began backing off and looking for a compromise. I assumed that they didn't want the political fallout that was resulting from their marketing practices. This was one of the times when I decided to take the burden off of our professionals who came from HEW and the National Science Foundation and who were deeply chagrined by the change in the U.S. position. These guys knew better and couldn't bring themselves to speak the U.S. position, so I said, "Okay, that's fine. I'll do the dirty work." *(laughs)* That's what ambassadors I guess are for. But it was these kinds of things that confirmed the worst expectations of some of the people in Geneva. Otherwise it was way overdrawn. I mean some of the fear of the Reagan people.

*Q: Did tobacco or the use of tobacco come up at all while you were there?*

HELMAN: Not while I was there. The other health issue that came up that was quite inspiring is that at that time the World Health Organization determined that smallpox had been eradicated worldwide - unfortunately it turned out that it really hadn't. But the WHO at that time had taken on an immense global program of vaccination to get rid of smallpox, and largely succeeded. They now have almost reached the point of polio eradication. WHO has had long-standing global programs on malaria and tuberculosis and is now the global coordinator in the battle against AIDS.

The WHO is a remarkable organization and, together with other of the Geneva-based agencies provide an unanswerable rebuttal to critics of the UN and multilateralism in general.

*Q: Did abortion come up while you were there?*

HELMAN: Not while I was there, no.

*Q: Thank God. (laughs)*

HELMAN: I had enough on my platter. But it was an extraordinary experience. I worked with some remarkable people, as well.

*Q: You didn't have the feeling that the UN staff was overstaffed with remittance men from various countries - time servers and that sort of thing?*

HELMAN: There was some of that but generally in specialized agencies you had to be technically qualified in some way. They may have had too many technicians but I wasn't really competent to make that judgment or evaluate the quality of their contributions. A lot of doctors, medical researchers, a lot of engineers, radio engineers, computer specialists and meteorologists and so on. Scrolling forward, in 1988, while I was with the Under Secretary, I was asked to be the U.S. "expert" on a so-called "High Level Committee" of twenty experts to examine the structure and function of the International Telecommunication Union - an organization of genuine importance to the commercial and national security uses of the radio spectrum. The Committee was supplied with a generous budget for outside consultants. The eventual report several years later was extensive, with over a hundred recommendations, all of them adopted by the ITU. While many of the recommendations dealt with management of personnel of the budget, the Committee found little evidence of overstaffing. To the contrary, the increasing demands being placed on the ITU, particularly by the US and its private sector could well justify staff increases.

I must confess I've always been very skeptical about the screaming and yelling about the size of UN bureaucracies and their sloth and duplication. There is that but in my experience in Geneva I didn't think that they were much worse than a lot of public bureaucracies I had seen, including that of the United States. My subsequent experience in the private sector tells me that the UN is no better or worse than some of the private bureaucracies you see in dealing with some large U.S. corporations. It's always difficult to say no, you shouldn't be more efficient. My view, and it certainly is the minority view, is that there are more important things for the U.S. to focus on and more that these organizations can do of interest to us if we showed more leadership and more confidence in them. We'd probably serve our own interests better if we concentrated more on that rather than whether nine people can do the job of ten.

*Q: It's a good political ploy, but it's not...*

HELMAN: It doesn't deserve the hullabaloo it has caused and the fallout in these organizations. Well, my comments a week or ten days ago gave you my view of what I thought of the UN budget as a domestic political football.

*Q: Did Jeane Kirkpatrick come out at all?*

HELMAN: Yes, Jeane came out two or three times. We got along really quite well and I think she was certainly interested in what I had to say and took - to say it bluntly - took guidance pretty well, or instruction pretty well, because I knew a hell of a lot more about what was going on than she did. She was good and smart.

*Q: So she wasn't coming out like Jesus claiming at the temple or something like that?*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* It wouldn't work on me anyway. It was a good relationship and she came out there for the Fourth of July once. We had a big Fourth of July reception with

some Congressmen there. She was a dynamo. It's just that she was sometimes wrong.

*Q: (laughs) Did you feel that with a new administration that your days were numbered?*

HELMAN: Oh, I knew my days were numbered. I was originally supposed to be replaced by Senator Javits, who unfortunately at that time was very ill - he had to retire from the Senate. He was suffering from a debilitating muscular disease. I'm not sure if it was Lou Gehrig's Disease or something similar to it. I came back for consultation - I think it was in the spring of '81 - called on the Senator in New York and said, "Let me know what I can do for you. Any help I can give you, advice I can give you." It was a very cordial meeting. But I could see from meeting with him that there was no way he was going to get to Geneva to handle that job.

I could tell from my visit then that his illness had progressed. Intellectually he was all there, he was terrific. It would've been a huge honor to be replaced by a person of such distinction, but it was something, I concluded having met him, that wasn't going to happen even though it was a month or two more before the information was made available that in fact he wouldn't be going. It was a while after that, towards the end of the summer, that the decision was made to send Geoff Swaebe. Geoff was a reputed member of President Reagan's old kitchen cabinet from California, along with Judge Clark, Charlie Wick and others. He subsequently was our ambassador to Belgium. He replaced me, I think it was sometime in October or November of '81. His background was as a department store executive, and he was successful at that and quite wealthy. Certainly an interesting, likeable and well-meaning fellow, but I don't think he brought anything special to the job. But, as I understand it, if he ever wanted to call Ronald Reagan, for whatever reason, Ronald Reagan would answer. But Geneva wasn't that kind of a job. It didn't require that kind of clout. But Geoff was a most responsible person. Years later I visited with him in Brussels and we got along very well.

*Q: When you went back - you know you'd go back from time to time to New York - did you find that our mission to the United Nations with the advent of Jeane Kirkpatrick and all and there was talk about if the United Nations wants to leave New York, I'll be on the dock and waving goodbye?*

HELMAN: Well, that was one of Jeane's people. That was just childish.

*Q: I was just wondering whether you'd sensed a different atmosphere when you went back.*

HELMAN: When I met with UN officials, or?

*Q: Both the UN officials and our mission. We're talking about early days.*

HELMAN: Our mission, it's my impression, had a hard time adjusting to the new regime and the in-your-face attitudes on the part of some who accompanied Jeane. I could use



more colorful language to describe some of those guys who I didn't think served their country very well, but that's another matter.

I do think that she opened up a whole nest of unneeded problems when she persuaded the U.S. government that in fact our dues to the United Nations were not treaty obligations and therefore it was optional whether we paid, how much we paid and under what conditions. After that it became a political football in Congress and so became a subject of all kinds of manipulation and bargaining and so on, and was, I think, destructive of both the institution of the United Nations and how available it was as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy. I don't want to overdo it because the U.S. was still so hugely powerful even with the Soviet rivalry that you could always rely on the fact that they'll need us more than we need them. But I think there's always a price to be paid for that kind of approach. We were fortunate that the rest of the membership accepted the assessment as a treaty obligation. Just imagine what the situation would have been like if others had adopted the same Charter interpretation. The UN would have been torn apart.

*Q: This is of course one of the problems when a new, somewhat ideological administration comes in. It takes them a while to work out the quirks and unfortunately this one there seemed to be an unusual amount of challenging obligations in looking at the fine print and trying to...I mean ducking a lot of obligations.*

HELMAN: Yes, they had their own perception of U.S. foreign policy; the UN really wasn't a comfortable fit into their kind of world. I think they viewed the UN as principally a hive of bad guys and focused principally at the political turmoil that characterized the General Assembly. To borrow from "My Fair Lady" and Professor Higgins, they couldn't figure out why the rest of the world couldn't be "more like us." Most of the countries weren't democracies, most of the countries weren't countries really, and it was a place in which you came to do combat, a dangerous place, instead of a forum in which you could organize things to advance U.S. foreign policy objectives. Thank goodness guys like Chet Crocker understood things better than that and despite, I think, some unneeded side excursions, came back and put the Namibia initiative back together again after it had been almost decimated by a combination of renewed Soviet military adventurism, using their Cuban pawns, and our new administration - which gave a lot of encouragement to the worst elements in South Africa, quite frankly, by buying into the South African vision of its being on the forefront of a fight against communist efforts to dominate the southern hemisphere. It was pretty bad.

*Q: What happened to you by October of '81?*

HELMAN: By the way, let me add one thing. One of my disappointments was that it was a good fifteen to eighteen years before another career person was assigned to Geneva, and that was George Moose. And George did a splendid job. Unfortunately, in between, there were a series of people with varying talents. I'll leave it at that. Too bad.

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: To get back to your question, I got back with no particular onward assignment. I got back after the first flush of ambassadorial appointments were made, having been retained in Geneva longer than had been expected. So I took on a number of specialized activities. For example I was named deputy head of the U.S. delegation to the second UN world conference on outer-space that took place in Vienna in the summer of '82. It was an interesting event that required considerable effort to organize. The U.S. delegation was very large, numbering close to 100 as I recall. There were arms control issues involved, so DOD was represented. So was NASA, of course, and State as well as a variety of agencies with scientific competence. The White House also used the occasion to award politically deserving types, as well as representatives from the private sector. The delegation included Ursula Meese, the wife of Ed Meese, who proved quite helpful. We had a large exhibit in an outer space exposition that accompanied the conference. It was put together by USIA and attracted participation by Charlie Wick. That was my first exposure to Charlie with whom I worked quite closely later when I got involved with public diplomacy. He carried a certain notoriety, but I liked him.

By the time I returned from Vienna, Larry Eagleburger was Undersecretary for Political Affairs, as I recall, and Larry had his own way of organizing things. I had gotten to know Larry quite well as his deputy when he was political adviser to the U.S. mission to NATO back in the early '70s. Larry had created a couple of positions which he called deputy to the undersecretary of state for political affairs, and I took one of them. So I embarked on a variety of activities that had fairly sizeable scope. I was able to function reasonably well within the Department and national security bureaucracy generally from that position. I remained in that job basically throughout much of the '80s.

*Q: So we'll pick this up in late '81 when you came back, and you'd mentioned that you were dealing with outer-space. We might talk about if there are any issues there that were of interest and then we'll talk about when you were working with Larry Eagleburger in political affairs and all of that.*

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*I'm not sure where we left off so we are going to start with your Washington assignment in '81. How did you leave Geneva in '82?*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* I hope not in disgrace. I was assigned to Geneva somewhat short of two years and I was the first non-political appointee to that job as ambassador to the UN there. I did not expect to be retained by the new administration and of course I was not. The first rumored replacement was Senator Javits, who at that time either had retired or was about to retire from the Senate because of illness. He had something similar to Lou Gehrig's Disease that gradually diminished his ability to move - it was a muscular disease. His name was withdrawn and I was not surprised; I had visited him in New York and clearly physically he was incapable of performing. Then they replaced me later that year with Geoff Swaebe - he also was subsequently our ambassador in Belgium.

In any event that was life in the Foreign Service and I came back to Washington sometime in the second half of 1981 with no particular assignment, no specific assignment, and I was lodged rather handsomely on the first floor where the transition team ordinarily is lodged. The first rather interesting job I had was to organize, manage, and participate in the second UN international conference on outer-space. I knew a bit about that from earlier assignments, and I certainly knew how to manage our participation in UN conferences. Reagan's NASA Administrator, Jim Beggs, was the head of delegation. He was a solid fellow, an engineer with a successful career in the private sector. The conference was in Vienna and I knew Vienna and the Austrian conference organizers from an earlier Foreign Service assignment. And I knew the issues. It was a conference in which the United States had no particular substantive interest but it was a good way of demonstrating our competence in outer-space. There was the usual competition with the Russians. So this took a good bit of time over the course of three or four months, beginning in early '82.

*Q: I would think that we were sort of preeminent in space, so that we would have an issue there.*

HELMAN: Well, we didn't have any substantive issues at stake, though we wanted, first, no damaging decision, and, second, some reasonably positive conference statements. There was an outer-space exhibition in connection with the conference. We also had a former astronaut on the delegation, I think it was Chuck Schmidt, who later was a Senator from Arizona or New Mexico. Great guy and a big hit with other delegates. He was very generous with photos and autographs. In those days, it was still a big deal to say you had met with a man who had been on the moon. We had that. There were a number of issues that were on the agenda on the future uses of outer-space, none of them were difficult to manage.

*Q: Nobody was challenging putting up satellites and things like that? Because that would've cut to the quick.*

HELMAN: No, it wasn't that. The Conference was one in a series of UN activities that promoted the peaceful uses of outer-space. The exploration and use of outer space, almost by the laws of physics, is a global activity, one that inevitably attracts the interest, opposition, help, cupidity and contributions of other countries. The UN served as a forum through which to channel a lot of this and make sure the interests of others were benign or even positive in their expression. If you look back to the record of the UN's actions on outer-space, they involved the Outer-Space Treaty, that probably remains a keystone of international law to the extent that it governs the uses of outer-space both for military and commercial purposes. So that has been a useful document and still pertains and still sets the standard. There were some follow-on treaties dealing with the safety and rescue of astronauts in distress and responsibility for damage caused by de-orbiting space objects. So the United Nations had a historic role and the United States would certainly not contest that historic role.

*Q: Were you picking up any of the contempt for the United Nations that was one of the themes that ran through the early Reagan administration?*

HELMAN: To some extent. There was some considerable initial debate in the Administration on whether the US should participate. This was before I got involved, though I speculate that there was concern that the Conference would somehow deprive us of something important. Once we decided to go, there was precious little time to pull together position papers, assemble a delegation and find the money to design and mount an exhibit. I probably was pulled in because they were desperate to find someone who at least pretended to know what he was doing. In the event, the Conference was pretty much a celebration of outer-space and our contributions to its development. There were some military issues, some arms control issues, but those were fairly easily dealt with.

*Q: But what you're saying about the delegation, including the wife of the attorney general, it sounds like it was sort of a nice thing to go to. (laughs)*

HELMAN: Sure, it was in Vienna. *(laughs)* One of the hottest summers anyone could recall in Vienna. And little air conditioning. But we survived. It was nice. It was nicely done and the delegation seemed reasonably happy with the results. Ours was a huge delegation, close to 100 people.

*Q: And something like that, as sort of the top professional person, did you find you're having to ride herd or something like that?*

HELMAN: I managed. I had a fair amount of credibility with everybody. I think they understood that I probably knew more than they were ever going to learn. I got a lot of support from our delegation chief, Jim Beggs. All the career people from NASA, from DOD, from State, who were on the delegation were very cooperative. My main management problem was how to have all of the many delegation members feel they were participating but keeping them away from the controversial issues or those that involved sensitive material. Not too many of the delegation members had security clearances, as far as I recall. I organized a technique for keeping everybody informed. Rather than hold delegation meetings where some of the sensitive issues might be raised, and from which I would have to exclude most of the delegation, I simply put together a small team with which I would consult and discuss, off-line, the classified issues that were of concern. But in terms of a formal structure of the delegation, everybody was a part of the team; everybody was welcome. Every morning everybody had a chance to talk. It worked. My recollection is - and it's been a number of years - that people were satisfied; they felt they were participants, they felt they were playing a role. We had the usual receptions and there was our outer space exhibit.

*Q: Did you find yourself also acting a certain amount as a teacher or missionary and other to this disparate group, you know, saying international relations matter, the United Nations matter?*

HELMAN: Yes, certainly I was doing that but it was not as if I had to take the initiative to overcome a palpable sense of opposition. Most of the people were fine. They were good American citizens; they wanted to do a good job for their country. They recognized that this is what we were involved in and they certainly were going to be on their best behavior with foreign nationals. There was an outer-space exposition associated with it that showed the glory of the U.S. and its achievements in outer-space. There was a competition with the Soviet Union that always excites enthusiasm and cooperation on the part of the Americans. I think they accorded me a fair amount of respect with my background and my knowledge. They were eager to learn whatever I had to say about the UN and the conference. I don't think I had any opposition, any backlash in terms of negotiations, in terms of procedure, organization of the delegation. I tried to make it as inclusive as possible.

Obviously when it got down to the nitty-gritty in some negotiations towards the end, I handled that personally. I didn't take along teams of people with me. I had the information I needed and I usually included one or two others from the delegation. I knew the subject matter fairly well so I was fairly confident. We weren't dealing with the kind of high profile issues where we had to have a decision by the National Security Council.

*Q: Did the rivalry with the Soviet Union show up in any of this?*

HELMAN: Well, in a couple of substantive issues, but mostly in the exposition; you know, we're better than you are. But they had a very fine display, the Soviets. As did we, as did France, as did some others. It was fine. The Austrians enjoyed putting on these kinds of shows and we participated. I think my only complaint was we got started late on our exhibit because of indecision over whether to participate in the conference so didn't commit quite enough money to put up the kind of exposition that we should have. But we still did a good job.

*Q: After that - this is still in '81, I guess?*

HELMAN: We're now into the summer of '82. After that I took a job that pretty much lasted me for the balance of my career in the State Department. Larry Eagleburger at that time was undersecretary for political affairs, and I knew Larry quite well. We had worked together before and he asked me to be something that he called deputy to the undersecretary for political affairs, which exists on no organizational chart but he invited me in the office and I thought what the hell, it sounded like an interesting job and it gave me a lot of leeway.

Larry was a very vigorous undersecretary. At that time Haig was secretary of state, to be replaced by George Shultz. Towards the end of my tenure I was labeled senior adviser to the under secretary because when Ron Spires came in as undersecretary for administration - and I knew Ron very well, as well; we used to car pool for years. He said this doesn't appear on any organization chart and it's pretty hard to justify in the long run.

I think this was when George H. W. Bush was taking over. And so he invented the title “senior adviser to;” it made no difference in what I was doing.

I enjoyed the job very much, particularly in the absence of another embassy coming up. It gave a lot of scope and authority for involvement in issues that either I was interested in or that the undersecretary was interested in, or for one reason or another wasn't able to get personally involved in. And it allowed me participation in a lot of Seventh Floor activities and initiatives, to take charge of some of them and to get involved in almost any substantive issue in the Department when I thought things might be going awry and potentially involve Eagleburger.

*Q: I must say that looking at this period I can't think of a more active period except maybe right after World War II. A lot of things were going on. First, sort of breaking this down into things, how did you find the Haig period - Haig's operations?*

HELMAN: Well, I came in at the tail-end of the Haig period so my comments on the Haig period would be the impressions I gathered from what others were saying or from reading the newspapers. How to put it kindly? *(laughs)* I'm glad he left when he did. I'm glad in part because he was replaced by George Shultz who I thought was really outstanding.

*Q: You know George Shultz comes to us almost a preeminent secretary of state when you bounced off. Were you feeling that it was Haig's method of management and vision that was the problem, or was it that the subordinates - the other people, particularly in the White House and all - were out to get him and this was the problem? What were you picking up from the corridors?*

HELMAN: I really wasn't picking up much of anything except that Haig operated in a fairly small circle and was superbly confident in his own abilities. He had of course vast experience in the U.S. government at the very highest level. Towards the end of Nixon's Presidency, with the almost disabling anguish that beset the President, some say that Haig effectively became President. Of course, he also was rumored to have been “Deep Throat”

*Q: Yes. I mean at the end of the Watergate thing it was really Haig who kept it together.*

HELMAN: That's right.

*Q: Haig and kind of Kissinger.*

HELMAN: So he was a man who was acquainted with command and I think figured he had it coming. I did not get to know Haig personally until well after he left office. People I know and respect very much, such as Larry Eagleburger, such as Rick Burt, who was assistant secretary for European Affairs and subsequently our START (Strategic Arms Talks) negotiator and later ambassador of Germany, thought very highly of Haig. My

impression was really formed around the periphery of his tenure and based less on personal experience than what I read in the press. There was good reason to question his handling of the Falklands issue. But of course he was not Secretary of State very long.

*Q: No.*

HELMAN: And that bizarre incident after the attempted assassination of President Reagan was destructive of Haig's position.

*Q: Yes, looking up and panting and looking. This was not the cool military man.*

HELMAN: That's where TV really did a man in.

*Q: Yes it really did because the way he said, "I'm in charge here," it looked like he was trying to take over or something and he didn't come across as...*

HELMAN: The look on his face.

*Q: Yes, the look on his face.*

HELMAN: Mine, at last.

*Q: (laughs) Larry Eagleburger had been so close to Henry Kissinger for so long. How did he meld with George Shultz?*

HELMAN: I think reasonably well but remember Larry didn't stay very long. The guy who replaced him was Mike Armacost, who by the way I think was in part Larry's choice. Larry had huge admiration for Mike. Mike came from the Philippines, where he was our ambassador. There were two people in the Foreign Service that Larry admired I think above almost anybody else. One was Mike and the other was Tom Pickering. Of course one can join in that appreciation. They're both superb. They are both unusually self-possessed, extremely smart. With a marvelous sense of timing and appropriateness. They knew whether, when and how to move an issue.

In any event I worked with Larry and when I worked with him I was able pretty much to pick and choose a lot of what I wanted to do. He would sometimes ask me to take things on. One such ended up as the National Endowment for Democracy. At that time, it was an innovative, almost radical idea. It was an idea that I think arose from the neo-conservative movement that included Jeane Kirkpatrick, Richard Perle, Max Kampelman and with respect to this particular subject, Carl Gershman. - for all I know he's still president of the National Endowment.

*Q: Was this sort of based on the German Stiftungen ? The Socialists and the CDU both have their very active...*

HELMAN: And the Liberal Party as well.

*Q: They had these very strong and apparently well done.*

HELMAN: Of course. Financed by the German parliament.

*Q: Financed by the parliament. Here's one that's coming out of one side of the political spectrum, so what were we talking about?*

HELMAN: I give them credit for the elaboration of the idea. I worked closely with them because they wanted to build a privately managed operation that got involved in political operations all over the world, and therefore would have an impact on our foreign affairs. They didn't want to do anything dumb or harmful and so recognized that there had to be some vetting operation by the Department. Very rapidly they pulled in the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, the AFL-CIO, and the Chamber of Commerce. On the Democratic Party side it was Brian Atwood, who later was of AID Administrator under Clinton. For the Republicans, we had Keith Schuette, who now is a prominent Republican lobbyist. I think Irving Brown had a role to play on the Labor Union side as Lane Kirkland's person. I forgot who the Chamber's designee was. The main point was that each of these people had direct access to the heads of their parties whose Chairmen, Chuck Manatt and Frank Fahrenkopf at that time, worked to make the Endowment a funded, institutional reality.

*Q: Was Irving back from Paris?*

HELMAN: Yes, he was back from Paris. He was working with Lane Kirkland and was a remarkable fellow.

*Q: His role in post-war Europe.*

HELMAN: He was one of the heroes.

*Q: Yes, I mean one of the great sort of men. You think of him in Paris distributing money and pushing levers and all of that.*

HELMAN: Yes. I remember, as a matter of fact, as a sideline, I had gotten to know Irving when I was in Geneva; I got to know him fairly well because he was active in the ILO. Afterwards he would come periodically to see Larry Eagleburger, who also knew him well, and knew Lane Kirkland very well, as did I. And both Larry and Lane were chain smokers so Larry's was the only office in the State Department with an ashtray reading "please smoke." I remember Irving used to come in and basically give Larry his instructions. *(laughs)* How to put it? Irving was a man who really understood what was going on and how to deal with it. Few people today understand that Europe was won from the Social Democratic left and the labor unions, and that in no small measure because of Irving. The communists had utter contempt for the right - the old saw that they would sell



the rope that they would be hung with. He really fought the good fight. He was a treasure. He knew the depression and the struggle both to organize labor and to keep it out of communist hands. Not surprisingly, he got along very well with Phil Habib, with whom I shared a seventh floor suite. Kindred spirits. Quite a crew. Where do you find people like that today? In any event, one of the inspirations for the National Endowment for Democracy, the NED, and the associated institutions - the National Democratic Institute and the National Republican Institute were the equivalents of the German political foundations and their practice of sponsoring political development programs in other countries.

*Q: The Institute for Peace. Does that come under...?*

HELMAN: No, that's an entirely separate operation, more like a publicly funded think-tank. There were actually five institutes associated with the Endowment; the National Endowment for Democracy was the umbrella outfit. Associated but not subordinate to it were institutes associated with the Republican and Democratic National Committees, the AFL-CIO and the Chamber of Commerce. The idea was that, in the past, the way the United States supported democracy, the democratic political institutions, newspapers and the like, would be through CIA covert funding. That led to a lot of success, but also the risk that was associated with exposure as in the cases of the National Student Association and publications such as "Rampart." The Germans demonstrated that a lot of the same political action and training can be conducted through public programs. Essentially, the Stiftungen and the Endowment gave currency and meaning to the concept of building civic societies. Just keep the hand of government muted, but not invisible.

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: The United States has good political parties, free labor unions, a very active private sector that operates through the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the like. And we thought we could put together programs and organizations which would allow these American institutions to operate overseas in a nonpartisan but overtly political fashion. That means not pitching a Republican foreign policy or Democratic foreign policy, but helping political groupings overseas or publications overseas to function, to operate sometimes in hostile circumstances, to create and organized more effectively politically, how to campaign, how to put together a party program, and all the other kinds of skills that we, as Americans, had learned and developed through the course of our history. The institutes would serve as training and funding sources for such civic technologies.

The Endowment got good support from the administration. I didn't face what I had feared, that our ideological administration would say, "Well, that's fine. We'll have the Republicans do it and let the Democrats figure out what they want to do when they can elect a president." I give Reagan's people credit, they really believed in the importance of spreading democratic ideas and of including an array of US political institutions in the process. We had good support on the Hill and the only problem was where to get the money. I think there was an understood risk involved in the project but we decided that

we would try to persuade Congress to appropriate the money to the National Endowment. They did so. I think it was at \$25 million. Dante Fascel gave marvelous support as chairman.

*Q: He's another one of the very stalwart - very solid persons.*

HELMAN: An inspiring person. I got to know him fairly well.

In any event, the Endowment and the Institutes got funded and it continues, and I think it has now been able to pick up some private funding to supplement the Congressional appropriation and some additional program monies from AID. Their original program concentration was on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. I later talked to some of the people in Eastern Europe after the fall of communism and they sung the praises of these guys. So I think that was one of the most successful small-bore, small money, targeted efforts that yielded high return. There is nothing so subversive as political ideas and the training to implement those ideas. There is no weightier political fact than the results of a free election. Micro-management by government would have been damaging. The Endowment's efforts now are directed more toward Africa and Latin America and even the Arab countries, including Iraq. More power. I'm really proud of my work to help establish them.

*Q: When you looked at some of these things, I mean I must say that one of the programs that's been going on, and continues, has been our exchange program. It's not dramatic but in the long run it probably is one of the most successful programs one can have.*

HELMAN: I agree. I'm talking about something different. The exchange program is overtly, knowingly, a U.S. government program. The programs conducted under the structure of the National Endowment, while paid for largely by public funds, is subject to almost no U.S. government control. In its early stages, the Endowment or an institute would "run" a particular program by me. I would put them in touch with the relevant desk officer or the office director for advice. I wanted certainly our desk officers to have some idea of what was happening because if there was any backlash these guys should be aware of it. There were surprisingly few problems and a gratifying amount of support from the desk level.

I protected the Endowment from an occasional effort to reject its programs or to exercise control over its operations. But it worked out. I think we had good support from the desk officers and from our posts. If you look at all of the election observer activities today, the political party training that goes on, you see the hand of the Endowment and the Institutes. It's a good outfit and a valuable contribution to the kind of foreign policy a democracy is best equipped to conduct.

*Q: Did you find yourself every once in a while wincing, because obviously in something like this I can see academic institutions just salivating trying to get into this and a lot of the academic analyses and ideas are not very practical.*

HELMAN: In fact it wasn't academic at all because we were talking about practical politics. How do you organize a political party? How do you manage a political campaign; train campaign workers; develop an effective political program, I mean as a serious political party. This isn't "book learning." In some of these countries if you organized political parties you were putting yourself at a certain level of risk. Or how do you run a political campaign? How do you take polls; how do you interpret them? How do you put out information?

*Q: How do you run an election?*

HELMAN: How to run an election. Exactly.

*Q: During the time you were there did you see a connection with the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, the OSCE? Because later they were running elections all over the place. This was after your time, but I was wondering whether...*

HELMAN: Well, I think by the time the organization was set up, a lot of the work of the National Endowment in Eastern Europe basically had been completed, and they were increasingly turning their attention to the developing world. A lot of work in Africa, Latin America, Central America, unfortunately just a little in Arab countries because there was precious little to work with there. I understand that is changing now, and the endowment people have learned to work with "precursor" democratic elements.

*Q: Were there any elements within the American body politic that were anti-this and anti-that?*

HELMAN: Yes, you had some. I think they came from the more liberal left and the harder line right; the latter thought that we should be much more aggressive and proactive in spreading democracy, sort of an "eat your spinach" approach. The liberal left felt that these kinds of programs simply constituted intervention and were wrong. We would be outraged if other countries sponsored political programs here. The best thing we could do was set an example through the proper functioning of our own democracy and foreigners will be inspired to learn from it. But certainly there was good support on the part of the Reagan administration and on the part of the first Bush administration, and on after. The Democrats, labor and business were on board. That's about as big a tent as you can imagine.

*Q: Did the Arab-Israeli factor get involved in this at all?*

HELMAN: No, not that I'm aware of. The Israelis didn't need any training from us in democracy, and as I said the Arabs were a hard and discouraging case. But that is now changing, I understand.

*Q: And Palestine in a way was not a particular issue at that time.*

HELMAN: Not for the Endowment.

*Q: What else did you get involved in?*

HELMAN: The Afghan War.

*Q: Okay. When you got there in '82 doing this, what was the situation in Afghanistan?*

HELMAN: Well, the situation in Afghanistan was that the United States in a variety of ways was supporting the mujaheddin against the Soviets through one of the largest, best publicized covert operations in history. And I guess this was also the time I got involved in functioning as sort of the State Department's oversight on the operation of USIA in Reagan's administration, to the extent that the State Department had concerns regarding what USIA was doing, or USIA wanted some role in State's foreign policy process. Charlie Wick was USIA Director and was something of a flamboyant personality.

*Q: Oh, yes.*

HELMAN: I agree.

*Q: As a personality bureaucrats had a hard time adjusting to him, but by God he produced the money. (laughs)*

HELMAN: Yes. He did indeed. He was a dynamo and really a delightful man. But I worked with USIA, worked the management and pros there. I helped introduce some foreign policy considerations into their operations and hope made them feel that they had some input into our foreign policy process. It was useful. It was important, I think, with respect to one of the projects I later undertook when Bob Kimmit was undersecretary, and that was in connection with Desert Storm. With the Afghan War, I assisted Mike Armacost in a variety of supportive political activities both on an inter-agency level and also in dealing with the mujaheddin whose external center was in the Peshawar area, and helping develop a variety of programs, allocating funds to non-governmental organizations operating in Pakistan and Afghanistan. And one group of programs that I thought was particularly important involved voluntary U.S. and non-U.S. organizations providing medical assistance, some of them frankly taking great risks. The International Committee of the Red Cross, the French-based Medecin Sans Frontiers and several others that did extraordinary, heroic work.

*Q: I suppose when you're dealing with non-governmental agencies, you've got - I mean I've heard people refer to them and say, "You know you've got the real line agencies which have been doing a lot of work, and then you have guys or gals with suitcases and claim that they have their own thing, and they're not really an effective organization." Is it hard to separate these people?*

HELMAN: No, it's not really hard to separate except that the real problem arose when, in several instances, let's say enthusiastic humanitarian types - doctors or something like that - decided they wanted to go in there and help. You know, the mujaheddin were extraordinarily courageous, quite something, but these newly formed outfits get the strong support of a senator or congressman and then of course wanted to show that they were out there doing the Lord's work. I had trouble with one bunch that had gotten Representative Charlie Wilson's support. Wilson was from Texas, a fairly senior Democrat, quite eccentric in his behavior and legendary with the ladies and his style of travel. He adopted the Afghan war as his cause and vocation, and was in part responsible for the decision to supply the Mujaheddin with Stingers. Anyway, he was not happy with my refusal to give money to this favored medical group. Other U.S. groups also wanted to do their Lord's work, which in Islamic culture was not particularly welcome. *(laughs)* You know, it's sometimes hard to say no, that you're not going to provide money to inexperienced American medical volunteers who want to go into Afghanistan and find Afghan guerillas to heal. But I was damned if I was going to release any money to Americans who the Russians could seize or some Afghans even abuse. We didn't need US hostages. Some other American groups were content to do their good work among Afghans coming across to Pakistan, and that was fine.

*Q: Well, it does raise the question, at that time were we concerned about Islamic fundamentalism, how it could turn on us, which it has - at least part of it?*

HELMAN: Certainly we foresaw that as a threat. Remember it was the dedicated Muslim who would take up arms against the Soviet Union. And the CIA with the help of some Arab countries and services was recruiting a lot of fundamentalist non-Afghans and training and arming them to be effective fighters. It turned out some of those recruits turned against us as al-Qaeda and Taliban alike. I think this is an area in which I would reject the temptation to be a Monday morning quarterback. Nobody foresaw the problem and in fact the Afghans were tough, determined and courageous. Some of them were not terribly nice characters and some of them were. I got to know a number of the leaders; I remember they sometimes tramped into the State Department initially Larry's office and later Mike Armacost's. They were a colorful bunch of bearded tough guys. I also met with a bunch of these fellows in Peshawar. I was glad they were on our side, though not all of them later stayed there. We were on their side and, after all, shared a common objective to get the Russians out of their country.

The U.S. was - let me put it this way, the mujaheddin were going to throw out the Russians no matter what we were giving them and regardless of how long it took. That's part of their culture; that's how they conduct their politics. We may face the same thing now in Afghanistan if we're not smart. But putting that aside, this was their country, the Russians had invaded, we had every interest in seeing the Russians pushed out of there. I think it was, as far as the Russians were concerned, our objective to make life miserable for them, both militarily in the kind of weapons that we supplied to the mujaheddin, and politically so that we took the every opportunity to undermine the Soviet political pretensions around the world. As it turned out, it was a war, an event, whose results

exceeded our wildest expectations - at least mine.

*Q: Were you involved in the debate over the stinger missile?*

HELMAN: Peripherally. Charlie Wilson had made that his personal crusade and succeeded. And the Stingers certainly give the Russians fits. Wilson is now departed.

Wilson was quite a character. He had the most beautiful women in his office I've ever seen on the Hill and rumor had it that he would enjoy their company. And he used to go traveling around Pakistan using the air attaché's aircraft accompanied by a choice staffer or two. But he was instrumental in getting a lot of money for the mujaheddin. He strongly supported the Stinger decision. There was a fair amount of diffidence in the State Department about that. That being said, the upside was that the Stingers proved to be a formidable weapon. But the downside is that the mujaheddin stuffed every cave in Afghanistan with extra stingers and other munitions. I'm sure we still don't know where the devil they all are. Presumably they're worn out by now, but I wouldn't count on it.

*Q: Yes, everyone hopes that rust has taken over.*

HELMAN: It probably has. These things deteriorate. But I think the result of the Afghan War was this hugely successful for us.

*Q: It helped. I mean it was one of those mistakes that really turned us...I mean Gorbachev finally withdrew from there.*

HELMAN: To me, the results were huge. It destroyed the Soviet army, and was an event that helped undermine the legitimacy of Soviet state in the eyes of its people. It turned out there was an effective public opinion in the Soviet Union and that it had turned in a fundamental way against the Soviet state and its leadership. It was something that we had not expected. We had put together a program that was designed to exfiltrate Soviet prisoners of the mujaheddin in Afghanistan. We knew there were some, but not how many. With the help of various agencies involved and some of the mujaheddin, we managed to bring some out. Our purposes were twofold. Some of these prisoners might have propaganda value in broadcasts back to the USSR, to convey the brutality and hopeless nature of the war. The second was humanitarian. The Afghans are not kind to prisoners and have no regard for the Geneva Conventions. Some of these guys were in pretty bad shape.

*Q: Yes, well one always thinks of Kipling as saying if you're wounded on the battlefield - this goes back to the turn of the century - you roll on your rifle, and save one bullet for yourself.*

HELMAN: Yes. These Russians didn't and they were generally alive, which is the best one could say for them. But we did bring some out to try and help them and did use them for propaganda. One of the things - there was great skepticism on the part of our Soviet

experts that there was anything of propaganda value here, in some measure because there was no such thing as effective public opinion in the Soviet Union, at least such as could influence the policies of the Soviet government. Events proved them wrong. Not only because of this particular program, but because of the general impact of the Afghan war.

I think what has been very little appreciated in the U.S., even in retrospect, is that when the body bags started arriving back to the villages, to the parents and grandparents all over Russia, and they were opened only to find random body parts - the Soviet forensic procedures were pretty sloppy - there was anger and bitterness. There was rage over what was happening to the kids in that country. With that, together with the stories that filtered back from the soldiers in Afghanistan, it finally hit home to the Russian population. And I'm not talking about downtown Moscow; I'm talking about the farmlands and the villages all over - the real Russia. That had a huge impact.

In some of the Soviet republics such as the Ukraine and Belarus, we learned that there were questions increasingly raised as to why their boys were being sent to die for those guys in Moscow. We sometimes observed that Afghanistan was the Soviet Union's Vietnam; it was that, and what I concluded from the information I saw, it was that and much worse. Our army, after Vietnam, fortunately recovered, but it was a tough job. The Soviet Army has still not recovered; its esprit, its morale was destroyed. As we pointed out earlier, the Afghan events, its impact on the general population and the way it was badly handled by the Soviet authorities undermined the legitimacy of the regime and, in my judgment, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet system.

*Q: Oh, yes. Did you have any piece of sort of looking at the Soviet Union and what was happening there during this time?*

HELMAN: Not really, except as it related to Afghan war crimes. Parallel to that of course, the National Endowment started to pick up their programs in Eastern Europe and even in the USSR.

*Q: Were we getting good reports from the change of attitude within the Soviet Union towards their leadership, towards the army and all that, or was this something that was happening, but below our radar?*

HELMAN: I think it was probably below a lot of radars; we were aware of some of these changes going on. And the Soviet leadership might have been in a state of denial. I was particularly sensitive to it because in a sense it validated some of the activities I was managing. But it proved to be very real. And of course we knew when the Soviet state started to disintegrate. I think, by the way, it helped destroyed the confidence and morale of the Soviet political class; it was just bad. It was a huge failure. What's more, there was no way out of the mess except to accept defeat and withdraw. There was no public support for staying. None.

I'm sure there were other events and factors that undermined public support over the

years for the Soviet regime, but from my perspective, the failure in Afghanistan and the impact of that failure on the grass root families, brought it home to the Soviet version of Joe six-pack.

*Q: Which was getting away from being just a manipulated inert mass, which I think the leadership expected it was there; it just wasn't there anymore.*

HELMAN: Yes, the officers were being fraggd. Everything you read about in Vietnam was happening in Afghanistan, except the Soviet soldiers were rather more successful I think. And the army hasn't recovered.

*Q: Did the changeover on the Afghanistan side, from the Reagan administration to the Bush administration - was there any particular difference there or was it a fairly smooth transition?*

HELMAN: No it wasn't. *(laughs)* I think the transition was every bit as bumpy as you normally would get from a republican to a democratic, or a democratic to a republican Administration; it wasn't an easy transition at all.

*Q: What were you seeing?*

HELMAN: There was very little retention of people in political positions. There seemed to be pretty much a clean sweep. In addition, there seemed to be little sharing of information from the old group to the new. There seemed to me to be little collegiality.

*Q: How did you manage to stay on?*

HELMAN: I don't know; maybe I did a good job.

*Q: (laughs)*

HELMAN: Maybe they didn't know what else to do with me.

*Q: I'm just wondering. It almost was a hostile takeover, which really surprised everyone - and some places it was more than in others. Did you find the Baker administration had the reputation of being a small, very tight little circle?*

HELMAN: It was.

*Q: And George Shultz probably ran the State Department as well as anybody has. I mean by getting cooperation with everybody and putting it together, both professionally and then almost personally. Did you have the feeling that you were cut off from the inner circle?*

HELMAN: You're right; it was a very tight-knit group. I was fortunate in the sense that,



not that I was a member of that group, but that I was working for a person who was. Bob Kimmit was in that group and I came well recommended to him. Besides, I think he felt I could help him understand the Department's culture.

*Q: He was. Yes, very much so.*

HELMAN: So I never really felt estranged, but you never got a sense of personality from Jim Baker and from some of people around him. I never felt I got to know him. The insider I did know well was Larry Eagleburger, who took over as deputy secretary. Larry and I remained friends. So I had whatever access I needed. But policy formation and implementation were really very much confined to members of that inner circle.

*Q: Besides the promotion of democracy in the Afghan war, did you have any other pieces of the pie?*

HELMAN: Well, I got very much involved, as I mentioned, in the USIA operation and in the Afghan war. I did get involved in some UN matters, such as the decision to leave UNESCO. The IO assistant secretaries who came in under Reagan would identify me as being the guy on the Seventh Floor who was in a position, because of background or experience, to second guess or even supervise them; I think there was a certain level of tension. A couple were pretty good - Rich Williamson, a Chicago attorney, who later ran for Congress and lost, and John Bolton. They came in with some questionable preconceptions but were smart and did a good job. There also was Allen Keyes who was bright and certainly articulate.

*Q: (laughs) You're making a circular motion by your temple.*

HELMAN: I know. He was a curious fellow. I think as far as UN affairs were concerned, Alan was very much a disciple of Jeane Kirkpatrick, who had pulled him out of the obscurity of a consular position in India and made him one of her ambassadors in New York. And Jeane obviously was very influential on UN policy.

*Q: Gerry, we'll pick this up the next time. We'll fill in where we left it off the last time. You mentioned working with USIA and I'd like to talk to you about that, about the decision to get out of UNESCO, what the problems were and how you were doing that, and then how the UN types, Jeane Kirkpatrick, played within the State Department some of the relationships as you'd see it there. Also a bit about Allen Keyes because I saw something in the paper today about him.*

HELMAN: Oh, really?

*Q: Yes. He's a perennial candidate for president. Not very serious, but he's around as a political entity and I'd like to get a feel because people have talked about him not with any great admiration. I'd like to get your view of him, and maybe some of the other people, on that.*

HELMAN: Great.

*Q: Gerry, we're still talking about Geneva, aren't we?*

HELMAN: Yes.

*Q: USIA, did they play much of a role?*

HELMAN: In Geneva?

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: Yes, as a matter of fact they had a pretty good USIA section there, very competent, and it was important to us to assure ourselves, assure others, that they fully understood our policies in a variety of the specialized agencies in Geneva. You may recall that Geneva is the headquarters of organizations such as the World Health Organization, High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labor Organization, all the humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee for the Red Cross, the International League of Red Cross Societies. Just a lot of things going on there and the U.S. obviously was an active participant in almost all of these activities. It was important that publicly our positions were well understood.

Our audience was principally the other missions and the delegations that would come to Geneva, but also the permanent UN staff there, which was quite large. So there was a job to be done. And of course the general Swiss public was important for us, especially in the canton of Geneva, to get our message out. Switzerland at that time was not a member of the United Nations as a whole; that is, the United Nations that is subject to the UN Charter. But Switzerland was a member, a very active and paying member, of a lot of the specialized agencies - a number of which operated under their own treaty arrangements, charters.

*Q: Did USIA sort of have a library? Did you find you were a source for a lot of smaller countries particularly, coming to find out facts and figures and things like this?*

HELMAN: No, we didn't have a library or anything like that. I suppose if anybody from another mission wanted particular public information, they certainly could've asked almost anybody in the mission and gotten that.

*Q: But you weren't acting as a source?*

HELMAN: No. The USIA office I think had two or three USIA people there; they principally served as my public affairs adviser and public affairs advisers to - I think I could almost say hundreds of - U.S. delegations that came to Geneva each year.

*Q: What was our position with UNESCO while you were there?*

HELMAN: Well, UNESCO is not headquartered in Geneva; UNESCO is headquartered in Paris. I got involved with UNESCO after I had returned to the Department after the conclusion of my tour in Geneva and it was one of the items that the undersecretary for political affairs asked me to pay attention to because for a while there it was obviously quite controversial and the decision as to whether we should or should not leave was one that had yet to be made. We made some last minute efforts to determine whether the organization could be reformed and I paid a fair amount of attention to it.

I think at the end of the day there were two reasons why we concluded that we should leave; one is that UNESCO persisted in the kinds of positions with respect to freedom of the press that, in our strongly felt view and that of the U.S. press, contradicted the concepts of freedom of the press and the responsibilities of journalists. And secondly we felt that UNESCO was badly managed, had a lot of useless personnel and its leadership was disinclined to make the kinds of changes we felt would be necessary to make the organization into something that addressed the purposes for which it was created back forty years ago.

Remember as well, I think even for the Reagan administration, which felt it represented a conservative revolution in the country, departing UNESCO was not an easy decision. This is an organization which the U.S. really created. This was Eleanor Roosevelt. There were some republicans who were not happy about leaving a U.S. creation. We were very conscious of that.

*Q: Who was the head of UNESCO at that time?*

HELMAN: I must confess I forget.

*Q: From what I gather, it was kind of run as a little thieftom and sort of a patronage thing for...*

HELMAN: It deteriorated into that. I argued against leaving because I decided to be a bit contrarian, in a sense trying to lean into the prevailing breeze. There were two or three aspects of UNESCO that I felt should be considered. UNESCO had an influence on the structure and content of a lot of educational programs, particularly in the developing world. It provided materials, guidelines, documents, journals, publications of various sorts from the elementary level on up. And as far as I was concerned, this was an ideological battlefield and I was disinclined to simply abandon the field to the enemy. The Soviets were happy to see us go. Then they had a free field. Secondly, there were a number of scientific programs that were run by UNESCO that were valuable to the U.S. scientific community. I think they were in marine biology and some other fields. But they were valuable. In addition I recall that UNESCO has a role in world copyrights; I recall there's a global copyright convention that's administered by UNESCO. At the end of the day I guess I was partially successful because we managed to maintain support and

participation in some of the scientific programs, and I think we had managed to continue participation in the copyright convention. Abandoning that would've been commercially a bad idea. I think on the educational side we simply decided that it wasn't worth our staying, so we left. I think probably the decision was a correct one if for no other reason than as an example to other agencies.

There was a prior example of U.S. departure in which I had participated as well; that's the International Labor Organization. We left in about 1977 because of the U.S. conviction, particularly on the part of the AFL-CIO and George Meany that the ILO had abandoned its principles in support of free labor movements by allowing Soviet and Soviet satellite labor union movements to serve as worker representatives when everyone knew they were not free to advocate worker interests in the ILO independently of the views of their governments. You know the ILO is a tripartite organization in which there was government representation from each country, worker representation from each country, and employer representation from each country. Each of those groups voted separately and independently and I can tell you that our labor union movement voted the way they wanted to on the issues that came up before the ILO; often they voted with the government, but not always, especially during the Reagan period. They opposed us sometimes, and certainly called attention to their differences with the U.S. government.

Anyway, George Meany felt very strongly that the ILO had allowed its principles to be corrupted by the Soviets therefore it was no place for the U.S., and persuading Carter that we should leave. We left. This was in about '77. Some reforms of the ILO did follow, but the main changes were in the growing political ferment in Eastern Europe, led by labor unions such as Solidarity. And *(laughs)* of course then George Meany died and Lane Kirkland took over. We concluded that the organization had in fact changed for the better and so we rejoined. One of the signal pleasures I had early in my stay in Geneva was to hand Francis Blanchard, the Secretary General of the ILO, a letter saying that we were back. That was a nice moment. *(laughs)*

*Q: You were sort of more than a fly on the wall, but anyway your observation of Jeane Kirkpatrick when she came in to be the UN representative and sat on the cabinet of Ronald Reagan? How did you see the fit with her in the IO and the UN from the American perspective?*

HELMAN: Well, she was a very forceful and very smart lady. I had a number of conversations with her when I was still in Geneva; she came over there for an orientation on what's happening in Geneva. I think also she came over there for one of the ILO events; or maybe it was the human rights commission. I forget which. She certainly was a learner. Her relationship with IO, and I think with the Secretary of State, as a member of the cabinet, was probably no more troubled than that of her predecessors.

The idea of making our UN Ambassador a member of the cabinet I felt was always a questionable practice. Even when you have an administration which is not particularly enamored of the UN, the UN nevertheless plays a significant role in our overall

diplomacy. Witness what's happening now with Iraq, for example, where the centerpiece for diplomacy is the UN. And having a cabinet member as head of our mission to the United Nations reporting essentially to the president - because after all a member of the cabinet is responsible to the president directly - and to the secretary of state as well, as a member of his foreign policy team, has built-in contradictions, which have always cropped up. It was true when Andy Young was our man in New York. But it goes back to Lodge and Stevenson, and certainly Arthur Goldberg and Dean Rusk never quite got along. No one was going to instruct Arthur Goldberg, for heaven's sake - except maybe Lyndon Johnson, sometimes. *(laughs)* So there was a built-in permanent stress there. And she was no exception. In my experience, the two best Ambassadors in New York were Tom Pickering and Don McHenry. Neither was a member of the cabinet. Both were pros.

*Q: Well, that's what I wanted to get at.*

*Allen Keyes, he was what, assistant secretary for international organizations at one point?*

HELMAN: Yes. Before that he was one of the ambassadors at our mission in New York with the UN.

*Q: What was your reading on him?*

HELMAN: Allen was a bright fellow who was extraordinarily articulate, and still is; a man with very clear ideological convictions which he carried out to their logical conclusion, whether it made practical sense or not. In many ways a very likeable fellow, certainly his rise within the Reagan administration was meteoric. I guess the story goes that Jeane Kirkpatrick spotted him as a junior officer in India someplace - Bombay or someplace like that - and thought that he was terrific and exerted her influence and authority to elevate him to an ambassadorship in our mission to the United Nations; and after that I think probably was instrumental in getting him the job in IO.

I don't think that Allen was a very effective assistant secretary because he assumed his political influence within the administration was greater than in fact I think it was. He was, I think, an inadequate player of the bureaucratic game, ideologically committed so that he was totally predictable. I felt that he was fundamentally a very angry person. I don't know why. I had, at that time, a number of good talks with him and in many ways found him most likeable, but I don't think he was a very effective operator. Maybe it was a matter of maturity. Why he went into politics, I don't know. I've not seen him or talked with him, as I recall, since he got involved in politics after he left the State Department. Clearly he's gotten some funding and I've run into people who think that he is terrific because he tells it like it is. God bless him; he has a nice wife, nice children. I doubt if he's going to be president.

*Q: When did you leave Geneva?*

HELMAN: I left Geneva in late '81.

*Q: Then what did you do?*

HELMAN: I came back to the Department and I was nicely housed in a corner office of "C" Street and Constitution where they usually have the transition team. I sort of moved in the wake of the transition team and I was given a variety of special assignments; for example I spent a fair amount of time into the summer of '82 helping to organize and run the U.S. delegation to the second UN conference on outer-space, which was barely substantive. A lot of exhibits and so on. And it was rather controversial in the administration because it was the UN and a couple of security issues were involved, and we were late in getting started in putting together our exhibits - there was a big exhibit hall - and of course the Russians were touting their prowess in the peaceful uses of outer-space and so on.

The head of the delegation was Jim Beggs, a very nice, capable guy but knowing nothing about the UN or diplomacy. He was Administrator of NASA at the time. He was very supportive of my efforts to organize a delegation both substantively and logistically and professionally on short notice. It was a huge delegation because there were a lot of private sector people who participated.

*Q: You got involved with the UNESCO thing, or was that later on?*

HELMAN: I think it was just a little later that I got involved with the UNESCO thing and that was when I went to work for the undersecretary for political affairs - Larry Eagleburger at the time. I would take on special projects that needed somebody with good knowledge and experience in foreign affairs, the confidence of the undersecretary, and a fair amount of ability himself. So it was a lot of fun and I took on some projects. One of them was UNESCO. Larry wanted to make sure that it was the right decision. And at the end of the day, as I said, I thought it was the right decision. I didn't think that we had any other alternative. But I'm surprised but happy to see that this current administration (*laughs*), of all administrations, of all organizations, has decided to come back to UNESCO. I've not really determined what the process was that led to that decision. I can't imagine it was very high on our list of foreign policy priorities.

*Q: No, I don't think so.*

*You were working for Larry for how long now?*

HELMAN: For as long as he was undersecretary. After he left, Mike Armacost replaced him. I worked for Mike for a couple of years through the Reagan administration, and then Bob Kimmit came in with George Bush the elder, and I worked for Bob as well. I was in that job for almost six, seven years.

*Q: So you're really talking about...*

HELMAN: Three undersecretaries - and then I retired.

*Q: Under Bush, the elder, what sort of things were you doing?*

HELMAN: Let me dwell on Reagan because there were one or two things that might be useful to record. I spent a lot of time on two things: the Afghan war, where I helped manage a variety of programs with respect to that war, and Mike Armacost was the principal Seventh Floor official below the secretary who was responsible for the day to day management of our diplomacy and political operations.

*Q: This was the Afghans fighting the Soviets?*

HELMAN: Yes. It was handled together with the Pakistanis, the famous ISI, and the U.S. had a variety of different assets in there - CIA and the like, and a lot of weapons and training and so on - and a variety of humanitarian support activities because the Afghan refugees poured over in the millions into Pakistan and would lodge largely in the Northwest Frontier Province around Peshawar and also down south around Quetta. It was pretty bad. It took a major effort on the part of the international humanitarian community - the High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and a lot of volunteer agencies to provide the refugees with the basics. Part of the problem with some American volunteer agencies is that they wanted not only to help provide aid and comfort and medical attention to the refugees, but they wanted to go into Afghanistan and sort of work on the battlefield; and we simply could not turn a blind eye to the telescope and fund American citizens to go across the frontier and risk getting shot-up or captured with absolutely no ability to help and with the possibility of all kinds of mishaps, capture - Lord knows what would've happened. So it was a rather tricky job to make sure we got the best of those who wanted money to run their programs. But I didn't need the gung-ho Rambo types.

*Q: Well, these voluntary agencies depended on very eager young people. Didn't they?*

HELMAN: Not only. Some were faith-based - I guess that's the term we use now - which didn't make Afghans or Pakistanis very happy.

*Q: When you talk about faith-based, you're really talking about Christian and often rather fundamentalist groups?*

HELMAN: Yes, very often so.

*Q: Oh, it's a great mix.*

HELMAN: A great mix. They were all good hearted people and I'm not sure they quite understood what the problem was (*laughs*) and it's not very easy to say no, particularly when they'll go running to Congressmen.

*Q: And also these were people driven by God and you just represented Caesar which was not...*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* You try to manage things as best you can. We provided a lot of money to the International Committee for the Red Cross; they used to run regular scouting missions along the frontier to pick up injured Afghans who had legs blown off and God knows what else, having dragged themselves to the frontier. The ICRC teams found them, hospitalized and treated them, gave them prosthetic devices or whatever was necessary to get them back on their feet. And the High Commissioner for Refugees - it was a major effort on their part. When it was clear we were winning we turned our attention, and this is something I'm personally pleased about - a couple of us - I was instrumental in it - well understood the problem with mines in that country. You may recall the press stories about the Russians seeding mines by air, often in the shape of toys.

Anyway, we cooked up the idea of a demining program in which we'd get competent professionals to train Afghans to remove mines. A very dangerous occupation, but one that was terribly important, with all of the remaining mines there. Absent such a major effort, the return of refugees and normalization of the life of the country would be much more difficult. We concluded that this, by necessity, should be a UN based program but that you also have to turn to the military for the needed skills and equipment and the U.S. military certainly were competent and in fact did participate. But there was more than enough work for the military from other governments - the French, the Brits and the rest. I went to make a presentation to the then-secretary general, the ever popular Boutros-Ghali *(laughs)* who was really quite a decent man who saw the issue very clearly, and who supported in helping organize this demining and demining-training program.

Anyway, it was established. I sort of lost track of it. It had gotten a good start with my oversight. This was something that gave me a great deal of satisfaction because it was a real program designed to deal with a real problem that was a terrible scourge to a lot of very innocent people - not only in Afghanistan but Angola and elsewhere.

*Q: And Cambodia; all over.*

HELMAN: And for decades to come.

*Q: At the time while you were dealing with the Afghan war, was the question raised about Islamic fundamentalism and what was happening? Because this later resulted in the following Afghan war with the Taliban with which we were involved.*

HELMAN: No, not really. This was, to my recollection, not an issue. It's important to recognize that we had, over the years, developed an effort that was having very fundamental negative consequences for the Soviet Union. The Soviets were suffering. To describe it as comparable in Soviet terms to what Vietnam was in U.S. terms is not an understatement. It was probably worse than Vietnam. In my own judgment, it helped



destroy the Soviet Army, and in many respects was a key factor in the downfall of the Soviet regime in Russia.

One of the programs - I think I mentioned this earlier - was the organized effort that I managed to exfiltrate Soviet military captives of the mujaheddin - they were of course not well treated by the mujaheddin - some of them were permanently damaged both emotionally and physically. But we pulled a number of them out and we did use them for some propaganda purposes when they came out. We tried to resettle some of them in the United States with some success, and others decided instead to go home. I'm not sure how they fared when they returned. But through that and other ways, we began to understand the impact of the Afghan war on the Russian populace as a whole. Their kids were coming back in body bags; they'd open up the body bags and there were body parts that didn't seem to relate to their kids. It was in the heartland of Russia that they all of a sudden recognized the brutality and the loss that they were suffering with their soldiers in a conflict that could only be explained to them in ideological terms, such as the Brezhnev doctrine. It didn't wash. The one example of Islamic fundamentalism that I recall involved some raids late in the war by Afghani Uzbeks into Soviet territory, both to harass the police but also to distribute the Koran.

*Q: Even then I was never personally satisfied by what the hell it was all about - why the Soviets went in.*

HELMAN: Well, I'd say the reason was that you had a "socialist" regime, a secular regime, that had taken over in Afghanistan, that felt imperiled and called upon their fraternal Russian brethren to come down and help them and the Russians did. I think it was essentially an application of the Brezhnev Doctrine. And I think the Soviet leadership, as others in Afghanistan, just misread the situation and their own capabilities. Something we should be a little careful of today, too.

*Q: Oh, yes. Right now the drums are beating by our administration and we're concerned. Which brings up a question: was anybody sitting around thinking, okay, if the Soviets pull out, what happens in Afghanistan?*

HELMAN: Well, I'll tell you I remember the circumstances fairly clearly; this was towards the end of the Reagan administration. Once the Russians were in the process of pulling out, we felt, I think quite strongly and quite correctly, that our job there was over. The only reason that we were making that large an investment in Afghanistan was because it had been occupied by the Soviets. The Soviets left under circumstances which were really quite favorable to us. They were defeated. There was no reason for us to continue our political and military support role. We would continue helping the refugees because we assumed that the Afghan refugees would be returning. We understood that Pakistan was badly impacted by the refugees, so we wanted to encourage them to return home. The demining program was part of this larger effort. We put together a number of programs with the High Commissioner for Refugees, in particular, to assist the returning Afghans. And we saw it, as I recall at that time, principally as a problem of getting these

folks back, resettled, mines cleared, and so on. But in terms of our political investment, in terms of getting more deeply involved, we decided no, the Russians were gone, we're gone.

I think there was also the view that to Afghans politics is sort of hand to hand combat (*laughs*) and they'll unite against an outsider, which the Russians were, and once that outsider is gone then they'll return to politics as usual, which is hand to hand combat amongst themselves. But if another outsider came in, even if it was the United States, we would be the target of their attention and we didn't want that because we felt our job was finished. So I think that the decision was made basically to, except for humanitarian assistance, get out. We tried to recover a lot of the stingers, with limited success, although that is a guess on my part.

*Q: These were the handheld anti-aircraft missiles that we worried about falling into the wrong hands.*

HELMAN: Those were deadly against Russian helicopters. They're probably still in caves in the country or who knows where else.

*Q: Yes.*

HELMAN: But I think we can consider our effort in Afghanistan to be a major achievement. Whether we should've been aware of the radicalization that resulted from the efforts of the ISI and our services with the mujaheddin is a fair question in retrospect.

*Q: It's a little hard to think what we could've done.*

HELMAN: I don't know, except gotten more deeply engaged than I think anybody would've wanted to at the time. Maybe we could have undertaken to dismantle the mujahedhin apparatus, but that would have required more control than I think we had.

*Q: Could you explain what the ISI is?*

HELMAN: Yes, that's the section of the Pakistani Army which is the intelligence service. They're a highly operational group and they've been prominent in the current campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. I've always considered it almost a state within a state, and an army within an army. They generally are considered to be responsible for training and deploying and managing the mujaheddin. They were close to the Taliban as I understand it, and have played a role, maybe the controlling role, in the activities of the Kashmir terrorists. I understand from some who have been involved with the ISI, even on the periphery, that it was itself radicalized by the Afghan war.

*Q: Now it's considered to have been pushing, fighting in Kashmir, too.*

HELMAN: It wouldn't shock me at all.

*Q: Were there any other issues that you were dealing with?*

HELMAN: The major activity in which I participated towards the end of my tenure was to help manage Desert Storm. Very much involved in that. Bob Kimmit was the point man in managing a lot of the day to day diplomacy involved in putting together the Desert Storm coalition and financial contributions for the effort.

*Q: He was the undersecretary for political affairs?*

HELMAN: Yes. He's now senior vice president for international affairs for AOL (America Online), last time I checked with him. He's a good guy. He was an outsider, with prior experience on the Hill and in DOD. He succeeded Mike Armacost and Larry Eagleburger, both very hard acts to follow. But Bob was a very savvy, very skillful operator; he knew Congress very well and was close to Jim Baker, and George Bush.

*Q: He was part of the inner circle around Baker that was very high powered.*

HELMAN: Sure. Yes it was.

*Q: Let's talk about Desert Storm. Did this attack on Kuwait sort of come like a bullet out of the blue as far as when it came, and what were you doing?*

HELMAN: Remember that prior to that we had had a relationship with Saddam Hussein. Iraq was not a stranger to us during the Iran-Iraq war. We sort of tilted to the side of Saddam, and that was under Ronald Reagan. The rationale being that we wanted to acculturate Saddam Hussein; in other words, teach him table manners and encourage him to become a productive member of the international community. That was part of the concept; you know, nurse him along, encourage him to conclude that his legitimate objectives can better be achieved through moderated behavior - this expectation from a guy who gasses his own people. *(laughs)* But then again, you know, this was a war in which you had two countries that were about as brutal and radical and draconian in their attitude towards their own people as existed on the face of the earth at that time. And they were fighting one another. It seemed to me we couldn't come out the loser, but we did tilt toward Saddam so we had a relationship with him.

There was a buildup, and of course we did send him warnings not to invade Kuwait. And there was the now famous incident with April Glaspie in which some concluded ex post facto that she was insufficiently stern in presenting a warning demarche to Saddam Hussein. I think April was badly treated there. She's a smart lady and a good officer. I knew her instructions and I think she carried them out in a very professional fashion. It's just that Saddam wasn't interested in playing our game; he wanted Kuwait. That led to the brilliant coalition strategy put together by President Bush and implemented by the Secretary, Bob Kimmit, and at the UN in New York by, as I recall, Tom Pickering. He was our permanent representative in New York at that time, wasn't he?

*Q: I think so, too.*

HELMAN: He probably was.

*Q: I'm almost positive he was.*

HELMAN: I think the way the entire diplomacy was organized was highly professional and, in a certain sense, text book, in that the President knew how to employ existing institutions and relations to achieve a major strategic objective. Saddam made the case easy to sell by engaging in a premeditated, unprovoked act of aggression. Iraq invaded and sought to annex a sovereign state, a member of the United Nations, in violation of the Charter and every known norm of international behavior. You don't do those things.

*Q: It was as blatant as...*

HELMAN: It was blatant; it was just a takeover. He said that's fine, I'm taking it. He bet that no one would act to reverse a fait accompli. His overall strategy was pretty blatant and the fact that he constituted a very serious threat to Saudi Arabia at the same time was also pretty apparent. And so it was in a way easy to rally the international community. Beyond that a major achievement was maintaining cohesion, with the Security Council authorizing the effort led by the United States government with a coalition of forces managed by the U.S., not the UN. So the U.S. had pretty much free reign to organize a very large coalition, militarily, politically and logistically; it was just a brilliantly put together operation, putting aside the combat phase, which turned out to be a lot easier than people had thought it might be.

But it was brilliantly organized, including getting others to pay for it who couldn't contribute troops. Bob and I used to joke that I think we made a profit on it in terms of contributions; the Germans contributed a lot of money but no troops; the Japanese a lot of money but no troops; Kuwait obviously had to contribute a lot of money as did the Saudis and other Gulf states. Others contributed significant military units, including the French. That was an extraordinary operation; sort of a textbook case on how you run coalition, and the President put it together. It served a model for the Afghan operation after 9/11.

*Q: And the big thing was George Bush Sr. 's instinct was absolutely right on the mark; I mean he sort of said this will not stand before you handle all of the advisers clutching around and saying well maybe...*

HELMAN: He was our Ambassador to the UN at one time under Nixon, so he knew what the possibilities of diplomacy were, and coalition building, and took full advantage of it. One thing I organized was a major interagency effort in public diplomacy. We wanted to make sure that we had a coherent, understandable, acceptable version of what was happening - both in terms of why we were doing it and why certain things were happening, and the direction they were going to go. And we were especially concerned

about the Arab street, so-called, so we paid a lot of attention to what we said to the Arab and Islamic worlds. This program had its public component and non-public component and we tried our best to stay ahead of events and issues.

*Q: What do you mean by non-public component?*

HELMAN: Covert propaganda and the like. So that we had different layers of effort with a reasonable amount of coordination between those layers, and we were very active in putting our senior officials on the tube and on the radio and everything else. They were very responsive and I think it worked. It worked in part because the story was easy to tell; it wasn't us invading Kuwait, it was another Arab country invading Kuwait. But nevertheless it's a story that had to be told because the usual kind of rumor mill started then as well, as to why it was all a CIA plot and that sort of boloney. The Arab world is the home of the conspiracy theory.

*Q: Well, one of the things that gets quoted now that I find...you know, to show somehow or another that still the conspiracy theory keeps going, was supposedly our Secretary of State James Baker, when asked, "What is this about?" and he said, "It's about jobs." And I see that again and again and it really always struck me as being not really what this was about. This was a subtext but...*

HELMAN: It was a subtext but I think what Baker was trying to say at the time was this, that Saddam's real purpose was to control the supply of oil from the Middle East, which means the world's oil supply. Kuwait was a major oil producer and of course he had his designs on Saudi Arabia too. After that, he could intimidate other oil suppliers without necessarily invading.

*Q: I know. It was very close to the oil fields.*

HELMAN: Very close to the oil fields, sure. I think Baker was saying if we allow Saddam Hussein to succeed then it will mean economic disaster and therefore jobs. So I think that was the line of logic. I don't think it was the wrong thing to say; it may have introduced into the public dialogue a theme that was a little more complicated than was needed at the time. I think it struck everybody. But he was looking at it from a valid but particular perspective. But I think that's what he meant. And I think we managed to accommodate that and move on. Certainly I think in terms of overall political/military/public diplomacy operations on the part of the United States, it was just superbly done all around. I was happy to make a real contribution.

The debate now, today, is should we have marched into Baghdad; should we have thrown out Saddam Hussein; and I think the answer at that time obviously was no. It was the right answer. It's easy now to second guess because Saddam Hussein has continued to be a monster - big surprise - but at that time I think the feeling was, as I recall it, that we could not hold the coalition together for purposes of regime change through military means. It would've been very difficult and costly to march in and take Baghdad. That

would have involved street fighting. I think there was also the feeling that after this absolutely total defeat the Iraqi military would themselves act to get rid of Saddam, that we didn't have to get involved in that kind of thing and try to manage it. So the decision was made not to go all the way. Again, I think it was a correct decision then; I think in perspective it still looks like the correct decision.

Saddam has continued to be dangerous. But he doesn't have anywhere near the military strength at his disposal that he once commanded. The army is reduced to one-third its original size from what I understand; he does not control his entire country; the general standard of living of the population is miserable; he spends a lot of money on projects that are certain to fail, such as whatever weapons of mass destruction programs he's been able to organize. He's a target of international opprobrium. Iraq is isolated. They are surrounded by hostile neighbors; Iran is not friendly; the Kurds are not friendly; Turkey is not friendly; Syria is...well, they're a threat more to themselves than anybody else; Kuwait is protected by the United States and I think Saddam knows that if he makes another move the U.S. will happily go in there and beat the hell out of him. So sometimes we have to show a little patience and wait until things change.

*Q: At the end of Desert Storm, was there a sense that, okay, we've done it. Was anybody playing what do we do now or was it sort of sit back and let the Iraqis take care of things internally?*

HELMAN: I think generally it was agreed to refrain from trying to dictate the internal regime of Iraq, that after such a disaster the military or other political elements in Iraq would bring about change without our getting directly involved. But it didn't take place. I don't recall anyone arguing for going to Baghdad, though I suppose the neocons in their foundations did.

*Q: Was there anything else we should talk about?*

HELMAN: I should mention some of the work I did on telecommunications in the last couple of years of my tenure. They were both substantively useful, but also helped point me to a follow-on career in telecommunications, and in this I was more fortunate than most FSO's. I earlier mentioned my work as the US "expert" on the High Level Committee of twenty established by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to review its structure and function. This involved several months of my time spread out over several years and allowed me to learn a good deal about the ITU. It's not commonly realized but the ITU plays a vital function in the allocation and management of the radio-spectrum on a global basis. It also establishes uniform standards of telecommunications connectivity, call settlement rates and standards and the allocation of country codes. As an agency, its irreplaceable. In any event, the extensive report, and the implementation of its recommendations constitutes almost a model for how an institution might go about reforming itself. At Bob Kimmit's request, I also became Deputy head of the U.S. delegation to the World Radio Conference in 1992. I was retired by then but served as a consultant. The Conference was important to U.S. industry because its main effort - as far

as the U.S. was concerned - was the allocation of spectrum for newly proposed mobile satellite systems. Several U.S. companies projected global cellular systems employing that spectrum. We succeeded. The Conference also took place in January in Torremolinos. Not bad.

I should also add just a couple of comments in terms of personal experience. I have not sufficiently developed the advantages and satisfaction I gained in the course of my career from working with some very remarkable individuals; people like David Bruce, Andy Young, Don McHenry, Phil Habib, Larry Eagleburger, Cy Vance, George Shultz, Don Rumsfeld and others. These were truly remarkable Americans who served their country well and were certainly an inspiration to many Foreign Service Officers.

I was ready to retire because I felt that I pretty much had my career and I wanted to have enough time to try and establish another one. And the field of telecommunications, particularly global communications, is one of the few sectors that draws on my foreign policy experience. I have been largely involved in that since my retirement. I might add that's its nice to know I can still make a living. After I left, I did publish one article on foreign affairs that I thought was significant. It was co-authored by Steve Ratner, who was in the Legal Adviser's office when I got to know him. Steve is now Professor of Law at the University of Texas. The article appeared in the Carnegie Foundation's "Foreign Policy" with the title "Saving Failed States." I'm pretty proud of that article. It is now often cited in more scholarly efforts because Steve and I were the first to identify and name the phenomenon of failed states as a matter for concern in the post-Soviet world, and the disorders that could flow from failure to recognize and deal with failed states. We developed the concept of "conservatorship" as one through which the international community might deal with failed states. Conservatorship would sort of be a mix of the old UN trusteeship system and the kind of court-supervised restructuring that is familiar in civil corporate bankruptcy proceedings. I recommend the article to you because I think it still holds up pretty well. Besides, the U.S. and others still don't seem to have a clue about how to cope with a phenomenon that breeds disaster, including terrorism.

*Q: When did that come out?*

HELMAN: It came out in the Winter 1992-93 issue. It's on a fair number of university reading lists now - and I've been thinking of writing a sequel.

*Q: The article was called?*

HELMAN: "Saving Failed States."

*Q: In what year did you retire?*

HELMAN: I retired in '91. It was in the last year of the Bush I administration. After, I was active with a variety of foundations - the Peace Institute, another one was Carnegie. My career in the Service pretty much spanned the Cold War. That having ended, I thought

the new age could be best left to the best devices of those who follow. They don't need me anymore. *(laughs)*

*Q: (laughs) Well, you won the Cold War, so what more can you ask for?*

HELMAN: *(laughs)* I'm satisfied.

*Q: Thank you very much, Jerry. It's been fun.*

HELMAN: My pleasure.

*End of interview*