Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

LOUIS F. LICHT III

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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Licht]

Q: Today is June 21, 2000. This is an interview with Louis F. Licht III. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Louis, could you tell me about when and where you were born and something

about your parents.

LICHT: I was born in Bangor, Maine in 1942. My father was stationed there in the Air Force during World War II. He was on duty, like a lot of other people, as an officer in the Army Air Force. After the war was over, we moved to Long Island, where I grew up. My father worked on Wall Street for his entire working career.

Q: Tell me a little about the background of your father and then of your mother.

LICHT: My paternal grandfather was a medical doctor who had come over from Germany as a young man from the Alsace region. He actually got his education in New York at Cornell downstate. He was a very successful physician. He also had a sideline. He sold coal and ice. He was quite successful and lived on Long Island. He practiced, starting with a German community, and eventually his practice became quite extensive. My father went to Yale, after going to school in upstate New York. He toyed with medicine but didn't like it. He liked riding horses more. He decided that he would go to business school, so he went to Harvard Business School. When he left it in 1940, he married my mother.

My mother is from Brooklyn. Her mother was German. Grandma was widowed early on. She was brought up by her mother, and went to high school, and put herself through some college. She met my father through my uncle. Anyway, they were married in 1940. Shortly, the war came along and they were in Bangor.

Q: Well, you say after the war your family moved to Long Island?

LICHT: Great Neck, Long Island.

Q: Your father continued on Wall Street?

LICHT: Yes, he commuted and then we moved out to an area near Glen Cove, called Brookville. That is where I was brought up. I went to a Quaker school, Friends Academy, which is in Locust Valley, and graduated from there.

Q: How big was your family?

LICHT: I have a brother and sister, both younger than me. My sister is four years younger and my brother is two years younger.

Q: How about at home? What were you picking up? Were you reading a lot or was there dinner table conversation?

LICHT: Oh, my parents are great readers. We were always encouraged to read a lot and probably did. I went to a fairly good school. It had fairly good academics. There was some emphasis on horses. My father was a great horseman, and we had a couple horses. I

took care of the horses. I took music lessons. I was in the Boy Scouts for a while, and even went to camp. It was sort of an upper middle class education and lifestyle.

Q: When you went to the Friends Academy...was this a high school?

LICHT: Actually, I started in seventh grade. In the Friends school, I think there were 50 people in my class. We went from seventh grade to senior year. We all knew each other pretty well by then, but I haven't seen them since. It was a nice school. The teachers had all been there for a long time. We had a Quaker meeting once a week, which stays with me as one of the nicest ways to bid individuals "adieu [French: goodbye]." It was a very warm and friendly school. It was a little bit removed from more raucous public high schools. We still had to wear a coat and tie when I was there. I graduated in 1960.

Q: Back a little to the family, where would you put your mother and father on the political spectrum?

LICHT: Very much Republican. I think there was a Democrat in my class, maybe one or two. But, I think it was overwhelmingly Republican. I remember the debate when Castro came to the country [Editor's Note: Castro's first trip to the U.S. was April 15-26, 1959], we discussed it in an assembly.

Q: At high school, what sort of things were you particularly interested in?

LICHT: The soccer team was interesting. I liked history, but I didn't like science very much. The best course I ever took in my life was a course called humanities, which was given by a teacher, Mrs. Flatburn. She hated it when you clicked your pen. She taught us, in one course, in one year, a little bit about philosophy, a little bit about music, and a little bit about art. She knew enough about all those things to make it very interesting with some good college texts and it ignited an interest that never left.

Q: How about reading? What were you reading?

LICHT: It's hard to remember. I was talking the other day to someone (I guess this was in my young years) about Landmark books. Do you remember the Landmark books? Landmark books are done by Random House, and they were basically history for kids. I can still remember the covers. I guess they don't publish them anymore. That's in the younger years. I can't remember what I read later. I think I was interested in everything. I can remember not quite understanding, but reading a Shakespeare play somewhere. I wanted to see if I could read it by myself. I was sort of all over the lot. That was an awesome task.

Q: This is what education is all about. Toward graduation were you pointed toward anyplace or did your heart follow anything?

LICHT: There was a lot of emphasis on where you were going to go to college. They

started drumming that into you very early. We were all pointed toward the Ivy league. There was probably too much of that, actually. There were a lot of tense moments. I felt that I was under considerable pressure. My parents did want me to go to Yale . I agreed. I got in probably because my father had gotten in.

Q: Again, while you were in high school - because it became obviously important later on - what about international affairs? The Eisenhower period was during the time you were in high school.

LICHT: Somewhere along the line, I came up with the idea that I wanted to know more about Latin America. I can't figure out exactly why. I think it was because I thought the language was a little more accessible. Part of my high school career was that I struggled with languages and never did very well.

Q: Welcome to the club.

LICHT: But, yet I always felt, by golly, it would really be interesting to understand another language, and be able to speak it. That might have been the reason. I thought it would be an interesting place to spend some time. I always did want to see more of the world than I had seen. Part of the world I was in was very comfortable.

Q: You went to Yale from 1960 to 1964?

LICHT: Yes, that's right.

Q: You arrived there during the election of 1960, which is sort of a pivotal election. A lot of young people sort of identified with this new generation, taking over. Did this hit you or did your Republican roots keep you tied down?

LICHT: When I went there, I had my Republican roots planted pretty firmly and established. Actually, my senior year of high school, I started to work for one of the Republican organizations on Long Island. It was for a very brief period of time. It didn't work out very well. Basically, they had me driving from one place to another. I sort of opted out of it. I got to Yale and the election was coming. Kennedy came, and I remember sitting in Lanman-Wright Hall where my dorm was and seeing him come down the main street. There was lots of excitement. I remember in our economics class, we had an instructor who always put his verb at the end of the sentence. He asked me what we thought of the debates, and watching debates. I maintained myself as a Republican while everyone else was getting pretty excited about Kennedy. It was exciting. I remember that at that time there was a poll made and most of the students were voting for Nixon and most of the faculty voted for Kennedy.

Q: It usually happens that way. Either the faculty is conservative or the student body is liberal, or vice versa.

LICHT: The greatest shock I had when I got to Yale was I heard someone say something derogatory about J. Edgar Hoover, which was amazing. I had never heard it. But, yet when it was mentioned, it all made sense. All of a sudden, my world began to change with these new ideas.

Q: What was your major? Were you pointed toward something at the time?

LICHT: I was thinking of political science. I eventually majored in history. You need to know history to know political science. I didn't know how little time there is to learn anything.

Q: Were you getting any international exposure at this point?

LICHT: I went to Europe one summer. I went from Britain, to Morocco, to Italy, and back to Britain, and Switzerland, on a motor scooter. I saw a lot, but there were others, my friends, who were highly involved in the Russian club, and things of that sort, but I never quite got involved in that sort of thing.

Q: Did national politics intrude at all, at that time, outside the Kennedy assassination, which shook people up a bit?

LICHT: I think overall we were interested in it. It was daily discussion. I was with a group of people who were not necessarily involved, but were interested in politics. We thought we were following things pretty closely. The Kennedy assassination, of course, rocked everybody. I can remember exactly where I was. I can remember the instructor who was giving us a class in modern French history saying he had been in France and they had shot at De Gaulle, and the kind of situation, it doesn't compare, but it was an American, it made a difference. Henry Turner, a professor of German history, in a big lecture hall, maybe two days later, gave his normal lecture. Finally, at the end he said, "When Hitler heard that Roosevelt was dead, he said, 'That is the end. They're going down.' But little did Hitler know that the death of one man would not keep the American public from its destiny." It still gives me goose bumps. It just came out of the blue. It was spectacular. [Editor's note**:** Henry Ashby Turner, Jr**.** (April 4, 1932 – December 17, 2008) was a professor at Yale University for over forty years. He is best known for his book German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler (1985) in which he challenged the conventional wisdom that industrialists in Germany were the Nazi Party's most influential supporters.]

Q: Well, were you mainly looking at European History, or was the South American thing beginning to take hold?

LICHT: No, actually I was still looking at American/European history.

Q: Well, in 1964, you were getting ready to graduate. Vietnam was not a big issue at that time, was it?

LICHT: No, it wasn't. But, it was coming down upon us. Because my father had been in the service through ROTC, he encouraged me to do the same. The fact was that he joined the ROTC because it had a cavalry unit, and he wanted to ride. He did ride. Of course, when World War II came along, he was a budget officer. But, as far as I was concerned, those were the days when you had to figure out how you were going to play the draft. I was told that you don't want to go in as enlisted man, which my brother did. So, I joined ROTC and was in the Army from 1964 to 1966.

Q: In the Army, what was your specialization?

LICHT: It was military intelligence training. You had infantry training and then military intelligence. They had this experimental program out there, in which they did send us to branch training. It was very strange; we basically went to summer camp and were put on active duty and told to learn what you could. For a while, I spent my first six months at Fort Meade, being extremely bored, and then I went to Fort Bragg. That was slightly less boring. Then, all of a sudden, in late November or December, we got orders to go to Vietnam.

Q: Your unit was?

LICHT: A military intelligence unit. Then, we were put on a boat in Charleston, South Carolina. I remember going up the gang plank. They had a band there, and it was playing "As The Saints Coming Marching In," and I thought that this was not good. We floated through the Panama Canal and the boat started to list, and we got to Los Angeles, where they found another boat for us. We were one of the last units to float across the Pacific Ocean. We went up the Saigon river.

Q: You were in Vietnam from when to when?

LICHT: From December to July 1966. My time was up in July 1966.

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Q: What was the situation in Vietnam this time?

LICHT: Well, it looked like we were holding our own, and actually, we kept being told we were winning, but as you know, eventually it went downhill. Got lots of optimistic reports. It is very hard to tell from where we were. I spent all my time in Saigon, at the Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base, pretty much in a trailer, doing things that didn't add up to a great deal.

Q: What type up things were you doing?

LICHT: We were doing collating intelligence that was coming in. I don't think it was done very efficiently. I got out to the countryside once. When I'd talk with my Foreign Service friends, many of whom were out in the Mekong. So, ours was kind of an

insulated experience.

Q: Did you have any feel for Foreign Service anytime during your military experience, or at Yale?

LICHT: Not at Yale. This is a world that was completely foreign to me. I never knew anyone who had been in the Foreign Service. I didn't really know how embassies were manned. Everybody my parents knew owned their own business. Most of the men seemed to go to New York City, and I maybe knew an engineer or two who owned his own business. People working in government were not known. The government was suspect. I think with my father, the best government was the least government. Basically very conservative.

Q: How about when you were in Saigon, did you get involved with the Embassy at all?

LICHT: Once or twice. Since we supposedly had our finger on the pulse of something, which it's hard to tell what it was. We mainly were making charts and making sure they were the colors that the general liked. We were invited once to the home of what must have been a political officer. Five or six of us were invited in Saigon. I can remember being disappointed, because it seemed like a great opportunity to sit down and have a real meeting. In fact, what they did was serve shish kabobs, so at the end of the day, you had hors d'oeuvres, and it added up to a meal, so they said, "This is your meal." I thought that was kind of a jip. But, it was kind of interesting. I thought, here are these people, who probably are doing more interesting things than what I'm doing. I went to the Embassy once for something, but I can't remember what it was. I can remember seeing the Embassy, but I'm not quite sure if that is mixed up with something I saw in the movie "Good Morning Vietnam" [released in 1987]. Still, I hadn't thought of joining the Foreign Service. What I thought I might do was become a newspaper reporter and maybe a foreign correspondent. Actually, that idea, being a journalist, had been in my head for a number of years.

Q: In Vietnam, did you get down into Cholon, the Chinatown of Saigon?

LICHT: No, I went up the Mekong once, and that was it.

Q: So, it didn't leave much of an impression on you?

LICHT: No. Well, I don't know. As you remember, any interest in Vietnam was huge. That was our turmoil in our youth. The big battles, the big discussions in the family, the big controversy. Vietnam sort of left me with an impression that the U.S. has a place in the world, and you are not always going to prevail, and that there are other people out there who are different than us. I haven't really seen it up close. If you are in a military jeep, and you are watching things out the side, and they are looking at you, they are eyeing you and you are eying them, clearly you weren't close to them, whether it's the Vietnamese, the French. So, you were sort of passing through, but not stopping.

Unfortunately, Embassy life can be like that, too.

Q: Oh, absolutely. Well, when you were getting close to July 1966, did you have a firm goal in mind of what you were going to do, other than be a foreign correspondent for The New York Times?

LICHT: I had no real firm goal. I came home, figuring I had to do something. But, I was thinking journalism. I ended up working for a local newspaper called The Long Island Press, during the Walt Whitman strike. Walt Whitman left and I quickly was hired. I was the sports reporter and the news reporter. I went to the police and kept track of files on everybody. Every weekend, we would publish them. I called up all the high school coaches every weekend after the high school games. One time, I interviewed the widow of a student I didn't know, but who had been at Yale for one year, before going to West Point, and had been killed somewhere.

Once in Vietnam, I ran into one of my instructor's Major Cootie. I remember in the middle of Saigon, I can't remember the name of the restaurant, but it used to be on the top...

Q: The Rex Hotel.

LICHT: Yes, the Rex. I ran into him at the Rex and found out that one of my classmates had been killed. That was sad, but you come back to the United States, and Vietnam I guess, was on the news and people were thinking of it, but everything was going wrong. You came out of this funny situation. Here, people had been killed, and we were deeply involved. It was very hard to understand. Now, you had to get on a different track. For the Army, you were doing one thing, and this was a completely different world. They didn't seem to understand, and I didn't seem to understand.

Q: How did you find the time you were working on The Long Island Press?

LICHT: Well, there was a period of some angst. Here I was a Yale graduate and I was thinking, "What am I doing silly little newspaper?" I was trying to spell things right is what I was trying to do and get along with the editor, who was drunk every afternoon. But, there were always one or two competent people. There was this extremely competent woman, who had been there for some time. So, I got some experience. I sort of liked it, but I didn't like the part of newspaper reporting when I was imploring people to get information out of them, and it didn't have any real purpose, except to probably make their lives less happy. But it wasn't a bad place to do a little bit of reporting and I got an offer from The Long Islander. Just about that time I responded blindly to an ad that got me a job in Forbes magazine. I had never heard of it. They said they hired people who knew all about business, and they hired people who knew something about journalism, and they hired young people. So, I went there for a year or two. I worked in New York for two years for them - 1967 to 1969. Then, I got restless.

Q: What were you doing on Forbes?

LICHT: Well, they would say, "Suggest to us a story, and then go out and do it." Every week or two we would have a story conference, which was pretty tense because coming up a story was the important thing. Writing the story was okay, but you had to come up with a story idea. So, you squeezed the story ideas. Once you came up with a story idea, then they would send you out to interview the president or the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the company that was involved. Of course, Forbes had a following, so that is what I did. I interviewed Roger Blough of U.S. Steel and think about the steel industry and my father had been studying it for years. He was an expert on it, and yet there I was, asking Blough questions, some of which were penetrating and some of which must have sounded awfully naive. But, nevertheless, the article came out.

Q: Did you get a taste for business?

LICHT: Well, I got this feeling that, by golly, if I had a real taste for business; I wouldn't be sitting here talking to all these guys who were making all this money. I felt that I had to get in there and start pitching. I guess it became clear to them, because it became clear to me that I really wasn't that interested. It was pretty hard work. I planned to maneuver into something else, and then the possibility of going to Washington came up. So, I came to Washington as a correspondent for Forbes and worked out of here for about a year.

Q: What sort of an office did Forbes have in Washington?

LICHT: It was a two-person office with a secretary. It was considerably smaller than I think was their usual, but they had a typical set-up.

Q: Well, this would put you on the floor for hanging around Congress, wouldn't it, mainly?

LICHT: Yes, I knew my way around Congress, and the regulatory agencies and things of that sort.

Q: Again, were you getting any connection to foreign affairs?

LICHT: No, not really. Finally, it became clear that this wasn't going to work out for either of us. I talked with the editor and he said, "Now, what are you really interested in?" I said, "International affairs." It was there, and always had been there I guess. And I said that is what I would do. He said, "Why would you be interested in something like that?" I didn't do it very quickly, but eventually I decided to apply to Fletcher (School of Law and Diplomacy of Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts). So I applied to Fletcher and Johns Hopkins [Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Washington, DC] and I was accepted at Fletcher, some what to my surprise. I went up to Yale and talked to Brad Westerfield, an international relations professor, who, years later, taught a class my son took. But, anyway, I said, "I think I'm going to Tufts University, Fletcher." We were

going to Boston anyway, and I had an interview, and was accepted. I had just recently been married.

Q: What is the background of your wife?

LICHT: She's from New Jersey. Her father was an engineer for AT&T, and Kim went to Wellesley (College, Wellesley, Massachusetts). She went to Chatham High School in New Jersey. She worked for IBM from graduation. She had the highest salary in her class. She was a math major, and I met her in New York City, after I had left for Washington. I met her just before I was going to leave. We got married after we couldn't stand long distance commuting on the metroliner.

Q: You were at Fletcher, from 1970 to 1973?

LICHT: Yes, ABD [all but dissertation]. I never even got started on writing a dissertation. That's where the idea of the Foreign Service actually came up. I had a friend who retired the same day I did, named Keith McClellan. You might want to interview him, if you're interested in lots of things. When I met Keith, he was a captain in the Air Force. Obviously, he had thought about the Foreign Service for many, many years. I met him, and he was also married, and so there was a "fit" there. I remember having them over for dinner and asking about his background, he said, "Well, I've been accepted to the Foreign Service." I thought that this was pretty cool. I want to know how you get into that? That is where that specific idea came up.

Q: At Fletcher, what sort of courses were you taking?

LICHT: Well, I did take Latin American courses, and European History as well, and some Economics, and law, of course. They had a standard first year, and then as you went on, you could diversify even more. You could take courses at Harvard. One of the professors there, John Womack, wrote a famous book about (Emiliano) Zapata [Editor's Note: Zapata and the Mexican Revolution (1968)] from his dissertation. He wove in the role of Thomas Lamont, who was a financier at the turn of the century. It was all about Mexico.

Q: Well, Fletcher was sort of an international school. Were there quite a few people there from other countries?

LICHT: Yes, there were a fair number. There were a number of Japanese, some people from France. There was a smattering of foreign students. Bill Richardson was in the class ahead of me.

Q: Secretary of Energy.

LICHT: Richard Burton was also in that class.

Q: Later, ambassador to Germany.

LICHT: Right, yes.

Q: Did you take the Foreign Service exam while you were there?

LICHT: I took it, but I took it declaring an interest in USIA (United States Information Agency). I didn't pass it. I didn't get called. Actually, I joined the State Department as an analyst for INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research). Actually, it was Bill Richardson who alerted the school to this possibility. I actually went down to the State Department and I called on Richardson. Richardson was the one who told someone that INR was hiring people as analysts. So, I went down there and eventually got hired to be one of four Latin American analysts. All the rest had Ph.D.s. I was thinking about writing my dissertation but obviously never quite got around to it.

Q: So, you came into INR when?

LICHT: In August 1974.

Q: You came in what, as a civil servant?

LICHT: Yes, civil servant with a Foreign Service Reserve commission.

Q: As an analyst, when they hired you, what were they expecting you to be doing?

LICHT: Well, I wasn't quite sure. Basically, reading the traffic that came from the embassies and submitting pieces, writing reports which were perhaps four or five single spaced pages that would come out periodically. Also, writing pieces for the Secretary's book. Depending on how hot an area you had, you had a lot of work to do.

Q: What slice of the pie did you get?

LICHT: I started with the Caribbean in the INR Office for Latin America (INR/RAA), which was pretty immaculate. Dominican Republic and most of the Caribbean. Eventually, I started doing Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela.

Q: You were in INR from when to when?

LICHT: 1974 to 1978. A program came along, which allowed INR analysts to go abroad. By this time, I was really aching to go.

Q: Let's talk a bit about INR time. What was your impression of the intelligence that was coming in for you to analyze, and the use that was put after you put your analytical tools to work on it? How was it used?

LICHT: I never felt it made a great impact. I never felt that I made a great impact. There

were some people there who had followed certain countries for years, and years and years. They did have an impact, I believe. It was pretty perplexing, when you first got there, to read all those reports, and try to put them into some sort of semblance of intelligence to which you, and someone who actually had been to these places could make real use of it. That was the thing I found most difficult. I had no real qualifications for being on the ground. During the Fletcher years, my wife and I used to go to Mexico City, and spent a summer there. I worked in the bank, not doing very much, but as far as the program was concerned... We traveled around quite a bit. We felt we knew a little bit about Mexico. But, my feeling was I would have been a much better INR officer if I had been on the ground.

Q: I would have thought that, looking at some of these people who had been dealing with the same subject, for years and years and years that this would have seemed to be not a very exciting place.

LICHT: It was going through some changes. They were trying to make INR more relevant to the day-to-day needs of the Department. I think there was a bit of a quickened pace as we got there. Some of the people had been there a long time and were pretty stuffy, but they knew quite a bit also. There were two women who had followed all these things for there for years and years and years. One of the economic specialists, Mary (can't remember last name), was a person who had really original ideas about things. The other one (I can't remember her name) was not so original. It wasn't a bad place to work, but on the other hand, if you wanted to do something meaningful for the United States, this didn't seem to be the place.

Q: What was your wife doing then?

LICHT: Taking care of the children. Our first child was born when we were at Fletcher and then two and a half years later Stephen was born. She had her hands full, and not much money.

Q: So, around 1978, you were seeing another way to...

LICHT: This opportunity with the Dominican Republic came up. It was an exchange program. So, I went to Dominican Republic as a political officer for two years. We arrived there almost a day that Balaguer lost the election [May 16, 1978], and had to give up the reign of power. Ambassador Bob Yost, who had just arrived in country, parked outside Balaguer's residence in his black car and made his presence known. The United States was watching what was going on, and Balaguer finally...

Q: We were sort of encouraging them to have a peaceful changeover.

LICHT: A lot of characters ran in the last election. This was 40 years later.

Q: How did you find (Ambassador Robert Lloyd) Yost? Did you get to know him very

well?

LICHT: Not very well, but he was a very approachable man. He was a man who was dignified but informal. I remember him showing me how to take pictures when we went on our trips. He was a nice man. I think some people thought he was a little hesitant in doing things, and taking dramatic action, and they got a little impatient with him. But, he had good instincts, and spoke good Spanish. He had a lot of experience in the Foreign Service.
Rand is wonderful. I don't know if you have ever been to the Dominican Republic, but it still has, physically, a colonial embassy. It's a lovely residence. The chancery is right nearby, and all whitewashed. We had the pool in between. The Yosts were pretty traditional Foreign Service-type people. I guess sort of on the edge were the wives who were no longer required to do things. I liked Bob Yost [Editor's Note: Ambassador Yost presented his credentials on May 15, 1978 and departed post on June 7, 1982].

Q: When you arrived there in 1978, what was the political situation?

LICHT: The country was going through this transition from (Joaquin) Balaguer, which really was a transition from Trujillo to quasi-democratic government. Balaguer had been its number one man. So, it was a question of whether democracy was taking hold. Of course, the country was in reasonably bad economy shape, and has been ever since. The U.S. intervention of 1966 still dominated conversations, especially as the evenings got later. The U.S., of course, was the biggest presence of any foreign power by far. There was an extensive AID mission.

There was also promotion of democracy, but not in the same intensity as I saw years later in Moldova or Armenia, where one was really bringing in a whole new idea to a different part of the world.

I know the political counselor was a little concerned about his security. I don't think we were overly concerned about security. In the middle of my tour there had been a hurricane, a major hurricane, blew all the trees around the city, made it look completely different.

Q: How did the embassy respond to the hurricane? [Editor's Note: Hurricane David hit on August 31st 1979, with125 mph winds in Santo Domingo, and Category 5 winds elsewhere in the country and killed more than 2,000 people.

LICHT: Lots of support from the AID mission and I think we were pretty effective. I happened to be on leave when the hurricane occurred and heard about it and then I called up the embassy. They said, "You can come back but your family has to stay behind." I remember getting off the plane, the New York Times had a picture of me, in the airport with an airplane absolutely upside down on a hanger. And we landed there, by golly! I think we were pretty effective, what we could do under those circumstances the U.S. did. No one was killed, which was amazing, considering

Q: How did you find the government there? You're sort of the new boy on the block but you're looking at it as a political officer. Did you find it, had it recovered from the Trujillo time? Was there a lot of corruption, cronyism or what have you?

LICHT: The military had a very strong hand, still. I think there was plenty of cronyism and we all accepted that was probably the case. It was a Latin American country evolving from a traditional sort of dictatorship. But there was some hope for democracy. There were real parties that were working hard and there was the PRD (Dominican Revolutionary Party), which was a strong party, opposed to Balaguer's party. And so there was a real political struggle going on that basically was adjudicated by probably a reasonably fair election. I'll have to look back and see exactly what we thought about it at that time. I was only there for the first two years, that's all.

What was noticeable and what eventually became apparent is that the new president, Guzman's family was stealing the country blind. In fact, as you might remember just before his term ended he shot himself and one of the interpretations was that he was in effect protecting his family honor. To the extent you could see it from the embassy and some could see it more clearly than the others and you could see it by talking to American businessmen, it was still a corrupt place. Who you knew was more important, who you slipped something to was more important.

But a lot of us, you use your imagination. Here you are, you arrive new, at your first post, you're a political officer, you're grasping the language or getting it more and more all the time, people are telling you things. The first line of defense for the local elite, the embassy groupies, the people who always showed up at receptions. Maybe somewhere along the line you penetrate. It was a good group of people down there, though. Peter Romero, the assistant secretary for Latin America, was on his first tour down there and Nino Gutierrez, he was ambassador to Nicaragua, I think he's Pete's number two, now, in the bureau, also started there.

Q: Was there concern that we were acting a little too much like a colonial power?

LICHT: Not on our part. I'm sure there was. I don't remember it as a feeling in the embassy there. They were soliciting us. One of my jobs was to be labor officer there, it came along with the other stuff. So I was the main contact with the labor movement and the AFL/CIO's problem down there. I spent a good deal of my time fending off people who wanted to go to the United States but were not getting visas, or sending over the right visa slips so that the consular officer wouldn't refuse them. I have to admit that in one case, I convinced them that the applicant was legit. He received a visa, went to the U.S., he and his wife, and took the union treasury. So that wasn't the high point at all. I was very disappointed. But I sort of had that sector of politics to myself.

Q: Did Haiti loom at all on you, or was it a different world?

LICHT: Haiti turned out to be a different world when I went over there to look at it but the Haitian workers are an important part of the agricultural scene, because they harvest the crop. There were very important distinctions about race, if you were very black or light. The Haitians were very black. So Haiti was a presence in the Dominican mind and not in ours. We didn't see any threat or anything like that. The history, the Haitians, they had dominated the island for a while.

Q: How about Cuba?

LICHT: There was concern that Jose Pena Gomez, who was head of the PRD, black and very fiery, very smart and never made it to the presidency, he died recently, that he might have close relations with Cuba. And then Juan Bosch, who was the other, elderly political figure, the counterpart to Balaguer, his relations with Cuba were considered important. So those were things we were concerned about. I guess the Dominican government reassured us but it was always a question.

Q: As a political officer, did this mean you got out quite a bit and talked to people and all that?

LICHT: Well I certainly tried. Occasionally I left the city and I tried to talk to as many people as I could. They tended to be younger ones. The political counselor pretty much wanted to dominate all the important people.

Q: Who was the political counselor?

LICHT: His name was John King. John F. King, he was a journalist before joining State in 1962. He came in in public affairs position and later became the Department spokesman for Kissinger for a number of years. Then he became director of Andean affairs and then he became political counselor in the Dominican Republic. I think he went to Argentina as political counselor. He was a Foreign Service Reserve officer, but always at high levels, an excellent writer.

Q: You were there until 1980. Were you able to, was that your time, you went back to INR?

LICHT: That's right, I came back to INR/RAR (Office of Research and Analysis for American Republics) in the Middle America-Caribbean Division (RAR/MAC) after that to work on Mexico and Central America…that was the period when we were concentrating on Central America, though I never quite got into that. I spent the next three years there. This was the same office I had been in before but newly renamed.

Q: So this would be '80-'83? What about Mexico at this time? This was, the Reagan Administration was getting ready to come in and did come in and all. They were bent on one course which seemed to be the opposite one of which Mexico felt would be right in Central America.

LICHT: I don't recall so much of that, what we were thinking about Mexico in those years was a great deal of concern about the oil situation. And Mexico, as I remember, played a reasonably cagey game as far as keeping its relationship with the U.S. and still not totally abandoning solidarity with the rest of Latin America. And its relationship with Guatemala, I remember as being quite important at that time. But Mexico is not very easy to penetrate, as far as its political situation is concerned. It was so tied up with the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), it's very interesting to see it, looking as it's coming apart now.

Q: Did you get down to Mexico at all?

LICHT: I did at one time, yes. Gavin was the ambassador [Editor's Note: Ambassador John A. Gavin was confirmed by the Senate in May 1981, presented his credentials on June 5, 1981 and finished his tour in June 1986.] Sort of an unhappy embassy.

Q: What is the feeling you were getting from the reports and people you talked to about the Gavin time at the embassy?

LICHT: The reports you got from talking to people was they weren't very happy with the way he was running the embassy. He was putting a great deal of responsibility on a very few people and was not fully using his embassy staff.

Q: He brought his own assistants with him.

LICHT: Exactly right. In fact I think, I do remember him not putting the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission, i.e., the second highest ranking embassy officer) in charge when he left, or putting somebody else in charge, much to everyone's distress. So I think he was considered pretty much an outsider as far as the Foreign Service was concerned, neglectful of it, disrespectful of it. So it wasn't a happy situation.

Q: Was the feeling, he had a Mexican mother and spoke Spanish and was glamorous, being a movie star and all that. Could you see, was that having an effect?

LICHT: People recognized that he had some real strengths, as far as relating to Mexicans. That isn't the same as being an effective chief of mission.

Q: Did you talk to the desk, the Mexican desk, and all?

LICHT: Yes, I was in regular contact with the Mexican desk. I remember talking to them about where Mexican oil was going and the Central American situation. I have to say it seems a long time ago now.

These were the years of the Panama Canal, too and I was Panama analyst for a while. That was when the treaty was actually concluded. So that was a pretty interesting time to

be in INR, following those particular things. Ellsworth Bunker, who was the special negotiator, I used to brief Ellsworth Bunker. You would take him things, he would look at them and then you couldn't tell if he was asleep or not. It was very embarrassing. Here you're a junior officer, you give him this highly classified stuff and you can't tell if he was asleep or not. You don't know whether to cough or what.

Q: Was there sort of a feeling of, in INR, of people dealing with Latin American affairs and sort of "Thank God, we've finally lanced this boil" as far as the Panama Canal, it's being turned over? Or was there concern the Panamanians might foul it up?

LICHT: There was divided opinion, as far as I can remember, on whether this was a good idea or not. There were some people who were not very fond of President Carter anyway and thought this was one bad idea. But I think in general people thought this was something that was going to happen eventually and recognized that the canal's strategic value was not the same as it once was. INR played a somewhat peripheral role in all this, so we had some good intelligence that we analyzed.

Q: What about in Mexico? Was the feeling that the PRI would be there forever?

LICHT: There wasn't much of a feeling that it was losing grip in those years. There were still two or three presidents to come. So, no and I had the feeling, talking to political officers there, it was pretty hard to find out what was going on. It was a closed system and it just rolled along very nicely.

Q: In January 1981 the Reagan Administration took over the administration brought with then some people who had very strong opinions about how we should deal with Latin America. This was a place where there was really quite a difference between the Carter Administration and the Reagan Administration. Did you find any sort of conflict there?

LICHT: Well INR shifted gears very nicely, as I remember it, though it was clear there were bodies being left in ARA. Jim Cheek, for instance, was put out, sent far away. I remember writing transition papers for the new administration.

Q: How did you find the intelligence coming in to you? Were you getting pretty good stuff from the CIA and from the military and elsewhere?

LICHT: There was good stuff and there was bad stuff. It's hard to characterize. Some was on the mark and some wasn't. What I can remember is not very accurate. Of course, I'm concern about what I can say.

Q: Certainly, but I was just wondering about the intelligence mix, whether what came in from say the CIA and maybe the military was melded in or did you pretty much take sort of State Department reporting plus newspaper reporting…

LICHT: No, I think we tried to put it all together. And the Agency reports were important.

It was always hard to decide when you got something from one source that was completely different from the other. And I guess we'd fall back on the State Department sources, because we seemed to know them. By the time you'd been there you probably had made a trip somewhere to talk with somebody, to get some perspective. The trouble with INR, of course, if you hadn't been there a long time it still took a lot of work to figure out what was real and what was off.

Those years I was working in the Dominican Republic, it amazed me how much information that was dependent on airgrams from the Dominican Republic. And it seemed as if the political wheels just went around a lot faster than other places, so that it ginned up all this interesting stuff in this little place. And in a way the stuff you got from there really overshadowed a lot of the stuff you got from places which were more important, like Mexico.

There were embassy officers in the Dominican Republic who just loved the place and they made very good contacts and being a small place you could touch base with a whole bunch of people. So is this the center of the world? No, by golly, but there's plenty to analyze.

Q: Well I would imagine, too, with Mexico there would be a problem since so many of the concerns were really being settled by cabinet-to-cabinet or by state-to-state or board-to-board. There are these border boards, like water agreements and all this.

LICHT: And there wasn't a vibrant political life that gave the embassy political reporters lots of insight into points of view because the partisan oppositionists were genuinely out, had never been in.

Q: How about Mexican foreign policy? Was this a burr under our saddle? They seem to take a certain amount of delight in at least making nice words about Castro and all that.

LICHT: Well, they do. We knew where they were coming from and they seemed pretty professional in keeping a single mind. We also knew that they had to be seen to be standing up to Uncle Sam. That was in our calculations. It was a little bit like Sovietology. They made a little shift here and this is really significant. They had a very constant line in the United Nations, on arms control issues and people who followed this for years and years. Garcia Robles was one of those people. So this is a real country with a real sort of developed foreign policy approach. So frustrating, yes, but frustration was expected. I don't think they were more fussed than they needed to be.

Q: By this time were you feeling pretty comfortable as a civil servant in the State Department?

LICHT: Yeah, actually, I'm beginning to think, here I am, I'd been abroad, there was the chance to do it and well I may go again but at least I've gone once. I'm getting to know these areas pretty well. My family's pretty comfortable. Our home, there's a lot of

delights there. I was almost forty, I was forty, I believe it was my fortieth birthday, close to my fortieth birthday, one of the people in INR who I worked with, who had joined at the same time I had was named Bill Lofstrom, he was a PhD who'd done his work on Colombia, gave me a call and said, "You know what? We can go and become Foreign Service officers with world wide availability." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well the Foreign Service Act of 1980 abolished the Foreign Service Reserve and you can become a civil servant or a Foreign Service officer." For some reason a small group of people had been given the opportunity to become Foreign Service officers and we fell within that cohort.

At that time I was still trying to figure out some way not to exactly do this for the rest of my life. And I started working for the Secretary's office on international labor affairs, figuring I could be the analyst for that, anyway and actually even going to take FSI's (Foreign Service Institute) economics course. So this call from Bill, much to my surprise, seemed rather incredible. I checked into it and it turned out to be true. And all of a sudden everything was changed. So that's how I ended up in this other pot – as a Foreign Service Officer, all of a sudden. And really quite pleased, because fate had dealt me this hand, because I was in this, sort of analyst for a while. I knew the rest of my life, exactly where I was going to go. So everything changed.

Q: Well this happened when?

LICHT: This was 1982.

Q: So what sort of move did you have to make?

LICHT: Bureaucratically all I had to do was sign a paper. And then I was not longer attached to INR permanently and I could bid on jobs and since I was in the Secretary's office, the labor slot in Peru came up and that's a natural thing to do. So I took the labor course at Georgetown for six months with two other guys, one who later turned up as my boss in Australia. And we went to Peru in '83 and stayed 'til '85.

Q: What was the situation in Peru at that time?

LICHT: Belaunde was the president and an election was coming up [April 1985], with the Apristas making a strong bid for the presidency.

Q: The Apristas being the…

LICHT: A party that was started by Haya de la Torre in the Twenties or Thirties and a populist party, with just a little bit of fascism mixed in there. He had never been in power. Each time he got close to being in power the military had done something. Of course Peru had a left wing military government before Belaunde had come to power. Belaunde had taken things from the left to the right, sort of changed the economic signals and Peru was of course having economic problems.

Q: Were they having, was it ITT, had they expropriated American firms there?

LICHT: During the left wing governments I think that had happened but during Belaunde's government things had been returned. One of the problems Peru had was changes of signals. One was for free enterprise; the other was for state control. It was in its right wing, democratic phase when I was there.

Q: How about Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path)?

LICHT: Sendero Luminoso was in full stride and terrorism was an everyday fact. Midnight 1984, New Year's Eve 1984, they blew the lights out, throughout the country, at midnight. That was a great way to start the year!

Q: Did you feel under threat, the American embassy?

LICHT: We were careful, varied routes and stuff like that but not paranoid about it. There weren't many, I don't remember any assassinations while we were there. The ambassador was more careful than the rest of us, of course, but we didn't feel terribly threatened. We felt that we should be a little careful and it was emphasized that we should be careful.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

LICHT: When I arrived, it was Frank V. Ortiz, Jr. [Editor's Note: A career Foreign Service Officer, Ambassador Ortiz served from November 1981 to October 1983 and then became ambassador to Argentina]. His successor was a University of Virginia professor, David Jordan [who served from March 1984 to July 1986.]

Q: How would you describe relations?

LICHT: Relations were pretty good. There were still problems with…they had connections with the Soviet military, who sold them planes earlier. But relations were reasonably stable. We were providing them assistance and we were trying to be helpful in disputes with Ecuador and Chile. We were trying to mount an anti-drug program and they were receptive, though it was an uphill fight. We were trying to promote democracy. I worked with the AFL/CIO and they were trying to work on, through their favorites to promote trade unionism and they were fairly cooperative. I would say relationships were on an even keel, there was no crisis at that time. There was an election, of course and during the election we were close to both sides. Eventually the Apristas won.

Q: How did they view the military? Were they marking time?

LICHT: I think we saw them as still having some affection for the left.

Q: How did you find the Peruvians as a people? Was it easy to get to know people there?

LICHT: Dignified and reasonably easy to get to know. Friendly towards Americans. Proud of their culture. Spoke very nice Spanish, compared to what we found in the Dominican Republic, it was easy to understand. Pretty approachable, as far as political contacts were concerned. It was an agreeable country to live in, though you were careful, because you were concerned about terrorism.

Q: Was our growing engagement in Nicaragua and El Salvador having repercussions?

LICHT: Well some, but as I remember they weren't as strong as, for instance, in Mexico. They didn't feel themselves as a Central American country. There was Latin American solidarity with maintaining independence but not of the paranoid brand. They were more concerned with what was happening with Ecuador.

Q: How did that work out during the time you were there?

LICHT: There were no incidents at that time but there was concern about it. But still, no incidents at that time. They were more concerned about their internal processes and the question of whether Alan Garcia would be elected or not. There was concern about the leftist mayor of Lima, Barrantes, who lost the election to Alan Garcia in '85.

Q: Was Fujimori a presence at all?

LICHT: No one ever heard of him. But Alejandro Toledo, who just ran, was someone the embassy knew well. I just remember meeting him and knowing him and knowing we knew him. Of course he was the perfect embassy groupie, in a sense, too. American educated and he understood us well, excessively well. I was interested to see him all of a sudden

Q: With Ecuador, how did we see this, just as a nuisance border dispute or…

LICHT: I guess we saw it as something that was always going to be a problem and had gone on for a long time. We knew it could flare up but during the time we were there it didn't cause too much trouble.

Q: Were there any repercussions to what was going on in Chile, Pinochet time and all that?

LICHT: No, it was just interesting to consider that it was so close but there was a regime that was completely different taking over. There was a feeling that Peru was different from Chile. Peruvians, there's a much larger indigenous population. Natives weren't wiped out, as much as they were in Chile.

Q: Was there much intermingling between the Indians and the Spanish descent people?

LICHT: From what you could tell there was consciousness and someone like Toledo, that's not true, the military, I think they had some people with that background. There was the normal sort of discrimination within society but there were prominent people from all backgrounds.

Q: In 1985, you were off again. This time to Australia.

LICHT: Yes, as the Embassy's labor attaché from 1985 to 1989.

Q: Wow. That's a good, solid time.

LICHT: Yes, it was a great, solid time. It was wonderful. Canberra is wonderful.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

LICHT: During my tour, the ambassador was a non-career appointee, Lawrence W. Lane. I think he was the publisher of the Sunset Magazine. [Editor's Note: Ambassador Lane served from January 1986 to April 1989].

Q: How were relations? This was still the Reagan Administration and how were relations?

LICHT: Relations were fine. We had our normal disputes with the Australians on lots of things; but there was also settled disputes. We knew where the Australians were coming from and they knew where we were coming from. Of course, it's very easy to work with the Australians because at least you knew what you were getting in each case. They were professionals and when you went in to talk to them about something you knew that they knew what the game was. It was a situation which I'm sure you're familiar with, when you go in and you had your brief and they had their brief and you pretty much knew what each other was going to say. And sometimes you get excited about it and then we'd go out and have a beer.

Q: What was your impression of the labor movement at that time?

LICHT: Well it was certainly different, the whole system was different from the one the United States, because the labor legislation was different. There's a court in Melbourne that adjudicates labor disputes and has a legal basis for what it does. The interesting thing about Australia and the labor movement was that in some ways it was like us and in other ways it was very much different. And that's true in parliamentary government, too. The labor movement was pulling itself into an era where you had to be competitive, where you had to realize that Australia was part of Asia, as much as the rest of the world, in fact, Australia was part of Asia more than the rest of the world. But there were some left wing elements that still held to what seemed like very old ideas about what capitalism was about, free enterprise was about. And there were some people who'd been there for a long time who were not going to change.

Q: I have a feeling that the situation in New Zealand and Australia was that you had some real sort of hard liner left wing labor types, reflecting the sort of coal miners of England around this time. That this was actually class war.

LICHT: There were people who still had that feeling and then there were people and mainly it was in Melbourne, Melbourne was a place where, when you get there you'd gone back thirty years or forty years. There were very strong ideological viewpoints. Left wing people, who eventually I got to know and right wing people, people from the Catholic side, life was struggle that would continue even if the world went on. They'd continue to be locked in that struggle and in that time warp. So that's a whole scene.

Q: Were you seeing any reflection of the immigration from Yugoslavia, from Greece, from elsewhere into Australia at that time?

LICHT: You certainly saw it in the taxicabs in Melbourne. In fact you saw it in the taxicabs in Sydney, too. So it was there and the questions still arose, were Japanese welcome, was Japanese investment welcome, was Bond University along the Gold Coast welcome, which was catering to Japanese or other Asian students. Australia was still going through that, probably still is.

Q: How about the American facilities, I'm told the Australians keep referring to them as the "American bases" and we kept referring to them as the joint bases, the ones, communication bases, naval communications type bases up in

LICHT: They required constant attention to make sure that their reception was favorable. At that time New Zealand's nuclear policy vis-à-vis our ships was such that we couldn't visit. Australia's policy on our ships was such that we could visit and within the Australian polity there were some with more sympathy for the New Zealand position than ours. That was a constant concern of ours, to keep that relationship on an even keel, with no major flare-ups.

Q: Did you find Canberra, was it sort of a small town?

LICHT: It was a wonderful place. It was a wonderful place for a family. The boys, my two boys were just going into their teenage years, the oldest one was. In Lima you had to watch them, wherever they went. In Canberra you could say, "Go off to the store, get on your bike and go where you want" and drink the water. There was very nice musical life there, too, because of the Canberra Music School, which would bring in professional people.

A real throwback to when Canberra was an outpost, there was a record library, like a library here where you'd get a book and they had these wonderful records that you could bring home and tape. I'd go there every weekend. It was a small town, but big enough, very nice for a family.

Q: Did you run across, was there sort of an anti-American hangover from Vietnam or anything else or anti-Americanism that

LICHT: No, there were groups and people, actually they were more concerned about our selling wheat at a subsidized price than about Vietnam when I was there.

Q: This is tape two, side one with Louis Licht. Were there any presidential visits while you were there?

LICHT: Vice President Quayle came. So, there wasn't [laughter]. But, it could just as well have been a presidential visit.

Q: How did Vice President Quayle do?

LICHT: He did all right. No one was upset. He came with the usual pre-planning and planning, and other entourages, and turned the embassy upside down. That was the first time we began to see young men wearing suspenders. Do you remember the suspender years?

A whole bunch of people with suspenders arrived, and then they arranged a trip. Mrs. Quayle came, and was quite effective, actually. Mrs. Quayle was very good. Vice President Quayle came in and was greeted by the embassy on the embassy grounds and he met the people. That was right after he had been to Samoa. He talked about the happy campers there. He said something along the lines of "It's very nice of you people here to help us arrange our trip, and take care of us." It was something along those lines. Mrs. Quayle got up and said, "Of course, we know you do a lot more than arrange trips for dignitaries, that you represent the country," etc. She sort of put it right back into the court where it was supposed to be. Bill Lane, who was the ambassador there, and as I was saying, he was from Sunset Magazine. I guess he handled that trip very nicely. I remember it was important to have a fire in the fireplace when Prime Minister (Bob) Hawke came. Of course, you had Quayle, and that was arranged. The normal nonsense occurred.

Q: I'm told that for most Americans, the Battle of Coral Sea is some obscure little engagement, but to the Australians, it is quite important, isn't it?

LICHT: Yes. I was very impressed by Anzus Day. The Australians are not flag wavers like the Americans are. They are pretty subdued about such things, but on Anzus Day, people show up and show a real respect for...many people, from Australia and New Zealand, just like Europe. In their low-keyed Australian-wearing sandals and shorts way evidences a real respect for those people who have served. Yes, I guess the Coral Sea was more important there. Like everywhere in the world, you look at it from a different perspective. Different things become important.

Q: Well, I thought we might stop at this point. We have come to 1989. Where did you go?

LICHT: I went back to the U.S., and I became Deputy Director in the Office of Freely Associated States.

Q: Today is the 14th of July, Bastille Day, 2000. In 1989, where did you go?

LICHT: In 1989, I came back to the United States to work in the Office of Freely Associated States, in charge of, then, Palau, Marshall Islands and Micronesia.

Q: How did this work? You were part of the Bureau of Pacific and Asia Affairs?

LICHT: That is correct. It was an office within the Bureau. It designation was EAP/FAS. It had somewhat of a special status because it worked very closely with the Department of Interior, and there was a compact of Freely Associated States which regulated the relations between the countries and the United States. It was in the bureau, but it was kind of a funny place. It was run by a political appointee named Byrd, who left just prior to when I came in.

So, actually, I ran the office for a year. Well, I did this from 1989 to 1991. A year after I arrived there, a senior officer came to take over the job. His name was John Becker. He's a friend of mine. Actually, I was acting office director for a year and then deputy for a year.

It was a whole new world because the Compact had a long history of their people who had followed the Compact for years and knew everything about it. I had a staff who was quite up on things, but was different from Australia, different from anything I had done. It was the first time I worked on a desk in the department since my method of coming in had been different from other people. It was more than working on a desk, it was running an office.

Q: By the time you got this, you had three states. You had Micronesia-

LICHT: Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau.

Q: Well, let's talk about Palau first. What were the issues with Palau?

LICHT: The issues of all of them were... It's pretty foggy, all these years later, but the question was how Palau was going to get off the government's dole more or less, and become an independent state. What the U.S. still would owe it, and how it would graduate from being the last trusteeship under the United Nations. The whole Trusteeship Council existed, at that time, because of Palau. It was the last one to go. If you remember, when we grew up, they used to talk about the UN in three parts, of which one was the Trusteeship Council. Well, when I got there, the Trusteeship Council had one job.

Q: Was there a problem in the Trusteeship? It's international political patronage and all that. So, I would imagine that there would be forces at the UN who didn't want to see Palau go its way.

LICHT: As I say, this is all pretty foggy to me at this point, but as I remember, most were willing to see the whole Trusteeship Council go its way, and wondering when Palau was going its way. But, the Palauans had a high degree of legal education for a very small island. It had some very good lawyers, and some very contentious people who were insisting that things move along in a way favorable to their interest.

Q: I spent a week on Pohnpei about four years ago. I was struck by the fact that, and I think it's true about everybody who goes out there, how much this reminds one of West Virginia. One of the poorest towns in West Virginia, not much in the way of industry, or anything else. Were we looking to see how we could sort of shuck ourselves of our financial responsibility at these three places?

LICHT: I think we wanted to get them off the dole as much as we could, but the momentum was to keep them on. Of course, in the Marshall Islands, we had Kwajalein which is still important. There is a certain amount we could do, and a certain amount that we couldn't do. One of the big things we tried to do was to get Micronesia and the Marshall Islands into the United Nations. That was done once John Becker came in. That was an accomplishment of that office over the two years, so he gets more credit for it than I do.

Q: What were the problems in doing this?

LICHT: I can't really remember the details of this. I think I would probably muddy the record, instead of clarifying it.

Q: Well, did you go out there at all?

LICHT: I went out there once, yes. I visited all three places, probably the first or second month I was there. I went out to a conference in Hawaii with the Deputy Assistant Secretary, whose name was Marilyn Meyers, and then from there, went onto all three of the islands. It was about a three week trip. I hit Kwajalein as well. I met two presidents. It was an eye opener.

Q: What role can you remember that the Department of Interior was playing at this point? Did they still have responsibilities?

LICHT: They did. They had a big role in the way the territories were administered. They had programs there, they had money there, and they had people going in and out of there, quite regularly. One of the problems was that our ambassadors, who were not ambassadors, they were sort of like inspectors, would discover that the Department of Interior guy had come and gone. There was a lot of this; people coming into the country

without getting country clearance. It was one of those constant irritations. I don't know if they ever got over it.

Q: While there, did you find yourself that you were treated sort of as an outside power by the Department of Interior? Was there much cooperation?

LICHT: There was cooperation. I think the only problem was that the government... there was always the enemy. The Department of Defense, The Department of Interior... You are not the enemy.

Q: The opposition.

LICHT: The opposition. The opposition was the Department of Interior, to a certain extent. Here, we acted normal. Fine Foreign Service officers arriving and leaving every couple of years. With the Department of Interior, there were people who had made their careers on these places. The office could run circles around you if you weren't careful.

Q: I also imagine that as within the United Nations, people made careers in this. Essentially, their career was a wasting asset. If these countries ever maintained true independence, they would be out of a job. Of course, travel is very expensive - one airline, Continental, had a monopoly. Tickets seemed very expensive.

LICHT: Well, there was a lot of toeing and froing. It was hard to keep track of it. It was hard to get your arms around those three places, with their local histories and their local characters. They gained a lot of attention and gained a lot of money.

Q: I guess our Kwajalein facility was the most important thing we had out there, wasn't it?

LICHT: Yes. Of course, it is quite an interesting community because there are families who have grown up on Kwajalein. The high school probably has one of the best academic records of children going to good colleges, anywhere. It was interesting to see that little sliver of land where people who had am impressive education living out their lives.

Q: After you were there for two years, in 1991, what did you do?

LICHT: I went to work for the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency on an assignment from 1991 to 1993 in its Bureau of Strategic and Nuclear Affairs (ACDA/SNA).

Q: What were you doing?

LICHT: First, I went to the last negotiations of the START II Treaty. That was quite interesting. I was kind of a minor character in the whole thing. I was with a group of negotiators, and essentially I found myself sitting at the table taking notes, this kind of stuff. I was writing the notes from the meeting, but it was at the time when the Soviet

Union was actually collapsing, and the people who were there to represent Belarus, and the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan I guess, who were junior members of their delegation, and all of a sudden were becoming senior members of their delegation, and all of a sudden were representing their own country, instead of their little token Foreign Service that they had. It was interesting to watch the transformation.

Q: Was there the feeling that with this transformation period, there was anything we could do at that point, except sort of sit and watch the Soviet Union collapse, and then wait until afterward to pick up the pieces, or were we scrambling to get these people and these new nations to get out of the nuclear business?

LICHT: When I was there, they were actually tying up the threads of the treaty on specific issues; very technical issues, and how close can you come when the inspectors come through the fence? The treaty, in fact was all but signed. The fact that the Soviet Union was falling apart didn't seem to deter the momentum, it just changed the players a little bit. Of course, you are only seeing one piece of the pie there. Looking back on it, it seems that there must have been more uncertainty than we felt in Geneva.

Q: Well, who was the head of your delegation?

LICHT: The man I worked for back in Washington was Stan Riveles. He was not the head of delegation. I can't remember who the head of delegation was, at this point.

Q: Was there still a divide between the Department of Defense and the State Department, or at this point, had things been pretty well agreed between them?

LICHT: I don't know. It seemed that we went back in Washington... I'm sure you were aware of this, but back in Washington, we fought like cats and dogs. Then, when you got out to the field, things seemed to go a lot smoother. So, I think the delegation was pretty well in sync with each other at that point, but back in Washington, there was a great deal of controversy.

Q: This was sort of the end of the Bush administration. Were people waiting for the outcome of the 1992 elections before tackling nuclear matters?

LICHT: I think nuclear matters were going ahead on their own track, and there wasn't too much concern about the next administration. Of course, there was a question... Bush might have been reelected.

Q: Yes. I was just wondering whether anything happened to make it a little more...

LICHT: Of course, there was the attempted coup. That was very interesting. It really was a question of whether the whole thing was going to go down the tubes.

Q: What did you do during that? Did everything go in suspense for a few days?

LICHT: [A fair amount] of suspense. Yes, just listen to the radio. Sure. There were analysts enacted who were trying to figure out what was happening, because like everybody else, they didn't know. I thought ACDA was an impressive organization in a lot of ways. Just as the Department of Interior had people who knew all about Palau, people in ACDA were in some ways, more diplomats than a lot of the Foreign Service people. They, in fact, went to conferences all the time. They knew the other side. They knew the issues very clearly. They weren't so mobile that they were transferred from one part of the world to another all the time. Among them, I found some impressive people. Some were concerned that some of their expertise would be lost in the new State Department bureaucracy. As a State Department person, I naturally rooted for the State Department to expand its empire.

Q: By 1993, had things been tied up pretty well, or how was it when you left?

LICHT: They were tied up pretty well I think, as President Bush went to Moscow to sign the SALT II Treaty on January 2/3, 1993. I remember watching it on television. Actually, halfway through that, I asked for a change in jobs to work for the Conference on Disarmament. I did that because I was such a junior member on this negotiating team that I didn't feel I had much to do that was interesting. At the Conference on Disarmament, I also spent a lot of my time at the end of the table. At one time, I went over with a group of people not to negotiate, but to see if we could put the skids on something called the Environmental Modification Treaty, which was supposed to set some international standards for how people could affect the environment in a very, sort of nebulous way. That was a fairly interesting experience. I went over with four other people. The conference was run by a Canadian woman, whose name escapes me as well. Eventually, nothing came of the treaty. The other good experience I had was when I went to Montreaux to a conference about land mines, which was an eye opener. It was a chance for me to report back on what was being done. I think ACDA eventually took a more active role in the issues. The United States still has not quite been on the right side, as far as I am concerned.

I found it somewhat uncomfortable because our position wasn't wanted. The sympathy was for the people who were totally against land mines, but there were parts of our position that I thought were too strong. I didn't mention it when I was there.

Q: When you were at this thing, were the Canadians taking quite a vigorous stand on that?

LICHT: I don't remember the Canadians as being particularly important to that country.

Q: Well, in 1993, wither?

LICHT: That's when I started taking Russian. I had done some labor work, and I sort of lined up that I go work for the George Meany Center, and hoped to go to Brussels. But

my heart really wasn't in it. Then, I discovered that there was this possibility of going to the former Soviet Union in the number two job, which sounded all right. The idea of taking of Russian sounded pretty interesting to me. It kept me in Washington for another year, so it kept us here another year while my younger son went through his senior year in high school, which I guess you can do anywhere. But, this was a nice way of doing it. So, I signed on to take Russian right here.

Q: How did you find taking Russian?

LICHT: Oh, my goodness. Russian turned out to be a pretty hard language for me. I've never been a very good language student. I found it pretty difficult. The change of pace was nice. At the beginning, it seemed pretty easy. Then, pretty soon, you had to work pretty hard.

Q: I think the older you get... You really want to get these under your belt before you get too far into the twenties.

LICHT: I was over 50.

Q: Well, you served then in Moscow from when to when? Was it Moscow?

LICHT: No, I didn't go to Moscow. I served in Moldova, whose capital is Chisinau. The question was whether I should take Romanian or Russian. I took Russian, and my wife took Romanian. It didn't work out terribly well. There was a time we were at the dinner table, and we had a translator translate what each other would say to each other.

Q: You were in Moldova from 1994 to when?

LICHT: 1994 to 1996, under Ambassador Mary Pendleton, and under Ambassador Todd Stewart. [Editor's Note: Ambassador Pendleton served from August 1992 to August 1995 and Ambassador Stewart served from November 1995 to August 1998.]

Q: What were your duties in Moldova?

LICHT: In Moldova, I personally was a number two in a small embassy. In fact, Ambassador Pendleton was the first ambassador there. Essentially, I was DCM and chief of the joint Political/Economic Section and eventually a DCM position was established. In Moldova, we had a concern that the split of the Transnistria area, which continues today, was a problem. It probably is the most important issue out there. The other concern was to try to make Moldova a viable place, to promote democracy, and give assistance. While we were there, one of the things we did was establish a stock market. AID had contractors and one of the big eight accounting firms there working on that sort of project. I spent a fair amount of time monitoring projects such as that. I would attend meetings that the organizers had. They would come to my office when they had problems, and we would try to work them out.

The Moldavians were going through a period of privatization of industry, through a very complicated process of distributing vouchers to all citizens, and trying to avoid mistakes that were made in Russia. They had their own system of doing that. Moldova was a country that was the most rural of the former Soviet Union states. Half of the people still live on the land. It is also the most populous per mile, although it doesn't seem that way. Chisinau is an undistinguished city with a nice park in the middle, with a center that still has the one-story buildings, old houses, but not terribly interesting old houses. Then, it is surrounded by the larger apartment houses of the type the Soviets built.

The people in Moldova are nice people. They are sort of Romanian, and sort of Russian. They are sort of confused about who they are. At the time we were there, there was some progress being made. I think Moldova was being considered a success, as far as U.S. aid was concerned. When I got there, a mission was there. I think since then Moldova hasn't done so well. I think there has been some more difficulty with drugs, that sort of problem. Transnistria was a nut that wasn't going to easily be cracked.

Q: That's essentially an area on the other side of the Nester River, which is Russian, isn't it?

LICHT: Yes, it's more of a Russian mixing pot. More Russian population, Russian army. People who retire to Transnistria. So, there's a larger Russian speaking population. Those who speak Romanian there still read it in Cyrillic, whereas in Moldova, they changed back to the Romanian alphabet. So, the people are really confused. Moldavians have been part of Romania, part of the Soviet Union, they are independent, they don't know if they want to be part of Romania again. Some people think it's like being the Appalachia of Romania, so why do that? It's a place, of course, where a lot of people have studied and operated in Russian and now they have to operate in Moldovan, which is really Romanian.

Q: Your wife was doing what then?

LICHT: Her background is in computers, and she worked as a systems analyst for IBM. She was able to get a job working with the systems there. She really didn't find it satisfying. In fact, she was pretty frustrated.

Q: During the 1994 to 1996 period, were we trying to do anything about the Transnistria issue, or was this something that was going to be settled by Moldova?

LICHT: No, we were deeply involved. The OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) has a mission there. The second head of it was an American. There have been other Americans who have been head of it. We were involved in trying to mediate that dispute and we had a negotiator named Joe Proessel, who when I was there would come frequently and talk to the president, and would go over to Transnistria. It was really interesting. You would go over to Transnistria which some wags call a

museum of Communism. You would talk to those people. There was a lot of discussion going on and there were people from the outside who would come in and hold seminars, or take everyone away to Norway, or some other place. It was sort of like what you said about Palau.

Q: W*hen the Soviet Union broke up, every advanced European country, United States and Canada sent experts or non-governmental organizations. The place was full of advice givers. I did it myself. I went to Kyrgyzstan to tell them how to set up a consular service. But, one wonders how really effective this all was. Sometimes it didn't seem that much was being accepted; although it was great for those who received grants.*

LICHT: We were wondering about that all the time. We tried to monitor it from the embassy. We tried to get a good idea of how money was being spent, and whether it was being spent in the right way. Intellectually, it was hard to get around it, and from the point of view of people coming in with big plans; to make those plans work, they had to have good relations with the government. They had to understand what was going on. They would come with models that would or would not fit.

The embassy did its best to keep up with all these people who were coming. People would come down from Ukraine, and come down to make a promise that could not be fulfilled. You would have to go in and explain that these guys misspoke. It happened once in a while. One thing I always thought about doing somewhere along the line was try to figure out just how much good all these programs were. I think there is a recent book about some of them. There are probably scads of books about them. It's a rich area to study. I was convinced that a certain amount of good was being done. If you were setting up the stock market, or the privatization exercise. Those things pushed ahead the free market in those places and was of some advantage to the country's long-term interest. Assisting in helping set up the courts. It often came down to how good an individual was, and what sort of relations he had with the government. You often would think a certain amount of money was being wasted.

Q: Would you say in Moldova, which was on one side of the Dniester, change was happening, but on the other side (Transnistria) it was pretty much as it was during communism?

LICHT: That's a pretty good way of looking at it. Not much was happening on that side of the Dniester. It was the old ways as far as you could go.

Q: Did you have a feel for whether there was concern there about maybe the Ukraine gobbling up this area?

LICHT: No. The Ukraine was of assistance in the Transnistria program, in the Transnistria negotiations, but it wasn't... It was more of the Russians not wanting to solve this particular problem at this point. Why should they at this point? They had their Russia, they had their troops there. The other thing was that there was this huge number

of arms there. That is where Army had its arsenal [Kolbasna]. There was an untold number of everything, and they didn't quite know themselves. A lot of it was rusting, and it's still there. To get the troops to leave wasn't exactly the solution, because the ammunition and explosives were still there and who would be guarding it? You wanted it guarded.

Q: It sounds like, in a way, it was duplicating a little bit of what we had to contend with in the Panama Cana or the French Algerians. The people who were living there don't want to be taken over or give up. In Transnistria they probably had, comparatively, a pretty good life.

LICHT: Yes, it didn't look as if Transnistria was going anywhere in particular, more from stagnation than from an industrial point of view, but the people turned themselves over to Moldova, which to them wasn't necessarily the homeland. But, also, [Igor] Smirnov, the fellow who ran it, and probably still runs it, and his troop were also known for getting involved in a number of crooked dealings and getting rich. They had some pretty ugly histories behind them. These were people you wouldn't necessarily invite to dinner. There were some very clever people there. There was a man who attended all these conferences, and was available. It was kind of fun to deal with him, but he was making a career of being foreign minister.

Q: When you left there in 1996, wither Moldova, what did you think at the time?

LICHT: I thought there was some chance for advance, that some Moldavians were probably getting the idea of what they needed to make the economy work. A certain amount of affection for them probably inspired a little bit of optimism. But, nobody expected anything to happen really fast. They were working out of the old mentality, which is not very fast. After we left, there was a project there that succeeded quite nicely. It was an offshoot of one that my wife worked on briefly for AID. AID tried to establish a system where Moldavians were trained to be consultants to new business. This sounded a little flaky to me because you are training some people to be consultants, something they haven't done in the past. There was a man there whose name was Vince Moravito, who has an interesting history and was hired by AID and the Soros Foundation to run this project. He knew someone who was, in fact, Moldovan, who had been reportedly in the Land Redistribution and Parks for Russia. He came up with a plan; he imported this man and together they came up with this plan that would help prioritize the cooperative parts, in a more logical way than saying, "Here's the farm, everyone gets one-eighth of it," and some people got the pond. They came up with a way to engage the people who were in the cooperative in the first place, to decide how it was fair to divide it up, giving people who wanted to get out, an out, like teachers. In fact, they started privatizing land, and since that program started, they privatized quite a bit of land. There would be a situation where the American ambassador would go and hand someone a deed. People would embrace him in tears. It was quite wonderful.

Q: Ah, good. Well, then, in '96, wither?

LICHT: Wither? To Armenia to work for Ambassador Peter Tomsen from 1996 to1998. [Editor's Note: Ambassador Tomsen served from September 1995 to September 1998.]

Q: What was Armenia like at this point?

LICHT: Armenia compared to Chisinau wasn't exactly Paris to Peoria, but Peoria was Podunk. Armenia is a place where, unlike Moldova, where people don't have a very clear idea of who they are, the Armenians have a very firm idea of who they are. It was a place where there was more available than Chisinau in terms of goods. There are more automobiles, probably. They have a maybe slightly higher standard of living and a firm feeling that this really was a country that existed before the Soviet Union. It was a tougher place to work. They also, of course, had territorial issues regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, which remains a very thorny issue. There, like in Moldova, there were various aid organizations all over, many I was now familiar with when I got there. It was a slightly easier place to live than some places. It was more difficult, but somewhat more interesting, political atmosphere. We had a larger embassy and a DCM to help run it. I guess I had more affection toward Moldova, but overall, Armenia was the more interesting place to be.

Q: Well, you must have felt the heavy hand of the Armenian community in the United States there, didn't you?

LICHT: We did in various ways. They were always on your neck, and when they came to speak to us...There was one time when a group of Armenian Americans came to speak to us, when one of our officers said something that he wouldn't have said if the government official were there. No sooner had the group left than the government was calling us in (I happened to be chargé at the moment) to object to this particular statement. So, you had to be pretty careful about that. There were important, well connected, wealthy Armenians from the United States who were well connected in the Armenia world. There was quite a bit of good work being done in the embassy. But, yes, you always had to be concerned about how the Armenian Assembly was going to view what you were doing.

Q: The Armenian Assembly being an American...?

LICHT: Yes, the Armenian Assembly is an American organization. They would come down out on particular officers, as not being sympathetic to Armenians.

Q: In a way, it duplicates the atmospherics which our embassy in Tel Aviv experiences didn't it?

LICHT: The situation is somewhat similar, yes. The Armenians now have either the third or the fourth highest per capita assistance of any country. They have a very good organization to solicit aid.

Q: What was our interest in Armenia at the time?

LICHT: We were interested in preventing an all out war in the Caucasus.

Q: In particular, Azerbaijan?

LICHT: Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh. We were interested in seeing that democracy was established and seeing they were generally better off as a democracy. We were interested in...(tape ends)

Q: Did any issues come up with Iran?

LICHT: We often talked to them about Iran because we wanted to warm them to make sure they were not cooperating with Iran in a way that was bad for our interest, particularly in being a potential transit point of nuclear weapons or other weapons from Russia. The other factor here is that there are still Russian troops in Armenia, and Armenia continues to feel close to Russia, closer than Georgia and Azerbaijan. People who came through were continually bringing up the Iran issue. And the Armenians were continually saying, "Look, we have no other options than to deal with Iran, because, look, we are blockaded by Turkey on one side and by Azerbaijan on the other side. The only way to get things into here is through Iran," which was right. There is a lot of transport across the border. The Iranians were buying things from Armenia. They were buying things like scrap metal from Armenia, and taking it across. So, the corner was Iran, Armenia and Georgia. That was the way they could get things in and out, to block it off would not have made sense.

Q: How was the government of Armenia, at this point?

LICHT: It was a democratic government, but the elections, of which there were three when I was there, were not fairly conducted. The OSCE...

Q: One of our colleagues was an OSCE observer there. I had been with him in Bosnia, and I asked him how it went. He said, "Well, they're a bunch of thugs, and it wasn't very helpful."

LICHT: The first year I was there, when they had a presidential election, it was later acknowledged by them, that it was stolen. Baaz Manukian, who was the opposition to the Ter-Petrossian, who was the president, shortly after the election, when it was clear that it wasn't being fairly counted, there was a huge demonstration. The embassy was just a little bit down the street from the parliament. The crowd assembled in front of the parliament gate and therefore in front of the embassy, too, as they marched. They weren't angry at us. They broke down the gates of parliament, went in and attacked the speaker, who was upstairs, and three other people, who landed in the hospital.

We were in the embassy and as all of this is occurring, all of a sudden, shots were fired.

So, we did the normal thing. We were buttoning up the embassy, and all these people were out front. It was a reasonably exciting night. As this was happening, we were getting calls from the government, saying, "They are at the gate. It looks like they are breaking down the gate." At that time, the U.S. had not made a statement about the election, not even welcoming the results. One of the things government wanted us to do was to make such a statement. Eventually, we made a statement that didn't congratulate Levon Ter-Petrossian that we would work with him, and was satisfactory enough, but we did deplore the violence that occurred. So, that was reason then.

We had observers out, during the election, of course, and that was pretty exciting. We had an excellent political officer named Susan Thorton, who was in one of the elections, in the district, watching the elections when at something like 1:00, the lights went out and a bunch of thugs came in and stole the ballot box. Someone said later they could not have picked a worse place, because one of the most respected observers was right there to see it happen. At that point, the Petrossian government was never very close to the American embassy. When he wanted help, he called us, but otherwise, he pretty much ignored us. Our enthusiasm for him was not terribly high either, after all this occurred, but we did try to work with him.

Q: Well, what happened when Armenian-Americans would come and ask you about election, what would you say?

LICHT: The fellow I mentioned to you before, where the Americans heard something said about the government that wasn't quite favorable, it would get back to the government. It was instant. You could put your finger on it. It was an instant in which an officer said, "Well, maybe we will never know if Ter-Petrossian was legitimately elected. That's the phrase that got back to the government, and apparently to the president. Quickly, the chargé was called in, and we had to quickly say something. Our answer was that we do not doubt that Ter Petrossian shoulders the responsibility of the president.

Q: So, our basic policy was, I guess, to try to foster development there, and to keep them from getting too close to the Iranians?

LICHT: And also to try to make sure they don't fall completely into becoming pawn to Russian politics. The importance of keeping the area peaceful had a lot to do with the Caspian oil we had an interest in accessing.

Q: Was our embassy trying to do anything with the whole Azerbaijan conflict?

LICHT: We worked with the OSCE in something called the Minsk Group to help the mediation process. The Minsk Group had three mediators, one from France, one from Russia, and one from the United States. There is still an office in the Department which is involved in this process, run by a fellow who was so important in Cyprus. But, we still have a negotiator of ambassadorial rank. So, the Minsk Group would check in with the OSCE. The members, the negotiators in the three countries would come through

Armenia, go to Azerbaijan, go to Russia, and go other places, to try to come up with a solution. They would come to town, and it was pretty interesting, because we had to read them in, we would deal with the Russian embassies, the French embassy, and we would make the arrangements for these people to come. We would cooperate on how they would meet, and we would exchange information, to the extent we could, and work with them to help them fix things. That's one of the nice things, sometimes it happens in diplomacy. But, it was very hard to make progress. The people in Nagorno-Karabakh had their own government, and they had to be involved as well. Our negotiators would go up to the Nagorno-Karabakh, but, we who were accredited to Armenia would not go up to Nagorno-Karabakh.

Q: At this point, Nagorno-Karabakh was basically under Armenia control?

LICHT: That's right.

Q: Did you find that you all, at your embassy, were cooperating with our embassy in Baku, or not?

LICHT: Yes, we were. I personally never got to Baku. That is one of the things I'm sorry about. Where you sit and where you stand has something to do with your outlook, of course, but I thought the cooperation between the embassies was pretty good. We also cooperated with the embassy in Georgia. When the negotiators would go from here to there, or from there to here, depending on the schedule at that time, so we maintained contact and we exchanged information, as you would expect. I think they knew the relationships with the ambassadors was good, and the rest of us seemed to work pretty well with them. We might have had clientitis somewhere along the line, but I think it overshadowed the U.S. effort to play a fair mediation role.

Q: Well, now, was official Armenia at that time, nurturing the narrative about the World War I massacre of Armenians, in Turkey, or not? Do they have other fish to fry, at this point?

LICHT: No. It's still on the agenda. Armenia is still awaiting an apology, and still awaiting recognition of the historical facts, that it was a genocide. It will be a long time before it goes away. It's part of national lore now. It is hard to deal with. But they would establish relations with Turkey, if Turkey would establish relations with them despite this. Nevertheless, it is definitely alive.

Q: How about with Georgia? Georgia had this almost subliminal civil war going on. Was that still going on?

LICHT: Yes, it was still going on. It didn't spill over into Armenia so much, but yes. The relationship with Georgia was pretty good. There were Armenians on the southern part of Georgia, which was a potentially area of difficulty. It flared up. They had good reason to maintain good relations with Georgia.

One of the things Ambassador (Michael) Lemon [Ambassador from September 1998 to October 2001] was working on and Ambassador Tomsen started working on was establishing better routes between Georgia and Armenia with the notion that eventually Azerbaijan could also be tied in. It could be a region, and as a region, it could be reasonably powerful, economically. Now, as a fragmented region, it's not economically integrated.

Q: There must still be troops in Armenia.

LICHT: There are Soviet troops in Armenia.

Q: What are they doing?

LICHT: They are guarding the border. In fact, many of the Soviet troops are Armenians who are in the Russian army. The Russian army is not necessarily well paid or well maintained, but they are there.

Q: Was there any feeling of threat from Turkey, from our perspective?

LICHT: From our perspective, there wasn't. From their perspective, there always will be, I guess.

Q: Were there cross-border raids, *or anything?*

LICHT: There was a threat. If you were Armenian, you would feel a threat, because the Turk and the Azer-Arabs cooperated closely, so if there were a conflict again in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenians would have to be looking toward their back. I think, probably, it is fair to say that if you were an Armenian diplomat, you would say, "We just have to do it."

Q: At one point, we had this Armenian liberation army, which was sort of a terrorist group, going around killing Turks. Where were any assassinations during the time you were there

LICHT: The sting seems to have been taken out of that liberation army group. The good Dashnak versus the bad Dashnak. The Turks are still mad about that. The Armenians are still not apologetic about it, but it wasn't as important an issue...No assassinations of Turks, no. A couple Armenians bumped each other off.

Q: In '98, how did you feel for Armenia? Did it seem to be developing along positive lines?

LICHT: Well, eventually Ter-Petrossian was forced to resign before the next election [March 1998]. Robert Kocharyan, who had been made prime minister [1997-98] by Ter-

Petrossian ran for election. Kocharyan had been the president of Nagorno-Karabakh, so when he was appointed prime minister, it was quite a spectacular event, and when he finally became president, it was almost like the war party had taken over. Yet, from what I could tell, he made an effort to push the negotiations along, but of course, he was replaced by somebody who was just as adamant as he was when he was in Nagorno-Karabakh. Do you remember the massacre in the parliament just recently [October 1999]?

Q: Yes.

LICHT: The way this played out, I think you had to kind of backtrack, as far as peace negotiations were concerned. When I left, I wished Armenia well, but thinking that it had an immense number of very talented people, and that Armenia will probably always take care of itself. It was moving slowly, slowly toward a market economy, slowly perhaps toward democratic government, but real democracy had quite a ways to go there. It would always have, in some way, to look to outside itself. A number of people who had traveled to California and back was immense, and that money had come to be very helpful. I guess the collapse of the Russian rule dealt Armenia a blow, too. They were getting remittances from us, from them. Slowly, slowly, Armenia, I hope, will get there.

Q: How about the earthquake? When was it?

LICHT: 1988. Years later, they have made minimal process in cleaning up. There were certain things they were good. There were some schools established by foreign donations. There was a certain amount of clean up. It seems like it is taking them forever, despite the amount of money that has been put in. Maybe that is unfair. If it had happened in Germany, it would have been cleaned up by now.

Q: Well, let me tell you, I was consul general in 1980 in Naples, when they had a very bad earthquake there. My understanding is that it still hasn't been cleaned up. The local bosses get in the corruption seat then, central government doesn't deliver very well, and the money gets pitted away.

LICHT: Well, I certainly think that happened in Armenia.

Q: Well, 1998, wither?

LICHT: I came back here and worked for the Department of Energy for a year in a program called Nuclear Cities Initiative. By that time, I mean I was close to retirement. But, all of a sudden, I joined the enemy, the Department of Energy. Now, the Department of State became the enemy. But I was somewhat of a liaison between the two. I worked for an energetic person named Bill Desmond, and a small group of people including nuclear scientists, some of whom had a lot of experience in Russia and some engineers. Basically, we tried to get a small program off the ground. It hasn't gotten off the ground yet, although a lot of energy has been put into it. The notion is to help those cities in Russia who previously have built bombs to convert slowly into civilian enterprises,

including a social aspect of giving support to be viable cities, establish small businesses, establish democratic ways of operating, give women a chance of certain equality. Congress has never quite warmed up to the program as much as one would think, it might. During the period I was there, I went to Russia three or four times with the negotiators who were working on it. I think it is stagnating now, perhaps there is always hope in the next presidency. I enjoyed having something to do with Russia directly, at that point. Going to Moscow a few times was pretty interesting.

Q: Did the Russians you were following in the negotiations, seem to be engaged in this project?

LICHT: They were reasonably engaged. They had interest in getting funds for things they wanted to do. Naturally, they wanted the funds without many strings. They all had a favorite project. Actually, the interesting thing here is that the Department of Energy had the program because of the natural relationship that has developed between Russian nuclear scientists and Los Alamos and those places. So, they are trying to build on that relationship, but in doing that, scientists on both sides had their particular hobby horses and very powerful people in the Ministry of Energy, on the Russian side, tried to divert things this way. You can't do that. We are not going to spend all our time developing something that you say is the answer. The most ridiculous plan was someone wanted to build an automobile at a fabrication plant and they would sell the automobile in parts. So, you would buy this automobile with just the wheels and the frame, and no doors. Then later you might buy the top. It wasn't suitable for Siberia at all. But, then they would get talked out of that, and someone else would come up with something else. The tensions there are interesting. The tensions between the Department of Energy itself, in Washington, the labs themselves who are entities to themselves...

Q: We're talking about Los Alamos and .,.?

LICHT: Yes. And then, the State Department, who doesn't think anybody else can run anything besides them, and the Department of Energy, who doesn't think the State Department understands this nuclear stuff anyway and, of course, with Congress, which contains people for and against the program. There was a lot of pulling and hauling and unfortunately, not as much progress as I would like. So, that is where I ended my career.

Q: Great. Well, we will stop there then.

End of interview