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

AMBASSADOR RICHARD W. PETREE

Interviewed by: Paul McCusker
Initial interview date: July 22, 1993

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Paul McCusker interviewing Ambassador Richard W. Petree on the 22nd of July, 1993, at Pelham, New York.

PETREE: This is Dick Petree getting set for an interview by Paul McCusker in Pelham, New York.

Q: Well, Dick, I'm happy to have you here in my home in Pelham. We will start with your earliest beginnings because I notice we come from the same part of the country, western New York state. I was born in Niagara Falls, and you were born where?

PETREE: I was born in Jamestown, New York, and lived for a time when I was a baby in Orchard Park, of all places.

Q: We used to go down near Jamestown to the Allegheny State Park which was part of my youth. Dick, how did two kids from western New York get involved in foreign affairs? Let's take you, you're the interviewee.

PETREE: Well, like so many of our generation, I think my involvement really came out of World War II. I was at the time, the beginning of the war, I was still, of course, in high school, and then in college in Des Moines, Iowa.

Q: What was that college in Des Moines?

PETREE: Drake University. I had graduated from high school there, public schools, and then went into Drake where my father was on the faculty, and faculty kids got free tuition, and it cost exactly 5 cents each way on the street car. That's how I started to college. But remember this was '42-'43; the Navy caught me up, and to my disgust and disappointment, I was pulled out of line in general in the Navy's training programs, and sent, somewhat against my will, to the Navy's oriental language school, which was then seated in Boulder, Colorado, at the University of Colorado.

Q: That can't be too hard to take in Boulder, Colorado.

PETREE: Oh, no, it was a wonderful place. I met my wife there, I learned Japanese; which was more important, I don't know, but both combined to have a great deal to do with what happened to my career afterward.

Q: What happened...I notice that you studied the language for a considerable period of time. Our careers were very similar. I studied Italian at Stanford University, where I met my wife, and I got involved with the Italian language which determined my entire career thereafter. Obviously the Japanese language that you studied did that for your career too, a highly successful one.

Tell me about your government service, other than the Navy, I mean. What was your first post.

PETREE: When I finally earned enough points, or otherwise became eligible for separation from the Navy in the summer of 1946, I decided that I really had to go to Japan to try this language out to see out to see how I liked it. Because until then I'd been programmed to go back to Des Moines, finish college, go to law school, and join some mid-western company as an attorney. Whether that game plan was what I wanted to do or not had to be tested against these new experiences I'd gotten, particularly the language training. So I applied for a job in military government in Tokyo, and I got a cable from MacArthur's headquarters, through the War Department in Washington, which said they were so sorry, there is no need in the occupation for a Japanese language officer. So they had no job for me. But they did happen to have a job in Korea, would I be interested? Well, I didn't know a great deal about Korea at that stage but I remembered somewhere that they, having been colonized by the Japanese, spoke a great deal of Japanese there, and it would be a good place to go and practice. So I said yes. The only hitch was that I had to persuade my fiancée that she had to wait a year before we got married. That was a painful decision we both made.

Q: Involving separation.

PETREE: That's right, because there was no way during those days in 1946 that an unmarried person could call his fiancée to a place like Korea where there was no housing.

Q: What did you do in Korea?

PETREE: In Korean I was assigned to a U.S. Coast Guard team that was located down in Chinhae, Korea, on the southern coast near the larger city of Pusan, which became famous later on during the Korean War. As one of the three civilians assigned to this Coast Guard team I was given the job of personnel officer for the Korean Navy which we were then setting up, and beginning to train. And I assisted in initiating all of the various training and personnel records, and other programs that one has to put into motion in order to run a modern Navy. And on weekends, evenings, and odd times I served also as an instructor in navigation and small boat handling for Korean trainees based at this support facility in Chinhae. I stayed there for a year before I went back to get married and to get back into college.

And that combined with language school persuaded me that I was not, repeat not, going back to Des Moines. So when I went back I recast my objective, academically, and began to try to fill out the political science kinds of credit that I would need for a degree, a B.A., and applied for graduate schools, Berkeley, Chicago, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Harvard, and I got accepted at all of them because they were very busy in those days trying to set programs to meet the needs of the time, particularly area studies programs which were new then. And they had federal funding for most of the student body who could attend those schools. So I ultimately decided on the strength of the China background of people like John Fairbank, that a) I really must go beyond Japan and Korea and learn about China if I was going to build a career in Northeast Asia; and b) the work of those men in those days was, in my mind, pre-eminently better than almost anybody else in the field. So I signed up for the two year master's program at Harvard, which I finally finished in 1950.

Q: You just finished two days before the outbreak of...

PETREE: Just two days before the outbreak of the Korean War.

Q: From there you went quickly into the State Department, is that right?

PETREE: Well, I was on a little bit of a holiday, but I had the summer before served as a student intern in the Department in what was called the Office of Intelligence Research (OIR), a the Division of Research on the Far East (DRF). That moved me to reapply to that office which was what was intended from the internship that they gave me the summer before. But at the same time the CIA was just forming in those days, and they were out after almost every live body that came to Washington looking for a job, particularly those who had any smattering of language and other kinds of area background. So I went through long interviews and testing process with the agency, and they offered me a job that basically was worth quite a bit more than the Department was willing to pay. But, I was not really encouraged by a lot of the questions that they asked about commitment, and the kinds of things that I theoretically could be asked to get involved in. So I chose to accept the State Department's invitation, and signed on in the late summer of 1950 as an intelligence research analyst in DRF. And since it was just the

first weeks of the Korean war, I was assigned to the Korean desk of DRF, along with many of our colleagues--Dick Sneider (Richard L.), who has just in recent years passed away. And I worked the standard intelligence assignment featuring briefing hours for senior officers in the Department early in the morning, and late hours collection of all the military and other intelligence required to work on presenting those reports overnight. It was busy, and interesting.

Q: And you were there for how many years?

PETREE: I was there until the Wriston program came along, and offered a chance for us civil service types to switch to the Foreign Service, if we were of a mind to, and along with almost all of the younger colleagues in INR, I chose to switch as quick as I could. I thought it was a wonderful opportunity.

Q: I was a Wristonee too, but not from the civil service. I was a Foreign Service staff officer as a lawyer at the embassy in Rome. When did you get your first foreign assignment? And where was it?

PETREE: Well, I went right on working in DRF for another two years, and finally was able to dredge up one possible assignment as assistant labor attaché in the embassy in Tokyo. I was assisted a great deal by a man whom I came to admire tremendously, named Phil Sullivan, who was the regional labor advisor for the old Far Eastern Affairs Bureau in the Department (FE). Phil later, the following year, went down in a PanAm crash: the plane disappeared between San Francisco and Honolulu. He and his wife were lost right after I went to Tokyo. In any event, he arranged the assignment, and it involved some interim training in the Department before I went to get into labor affairs. And I reported to Tokyo in June of 1957, and worked at the labor business in the political section of the embassy, 1957 to 1960.

The highlights of that period really had to do with learning the ins and outs of reporting, in general, on labor cost factors that affected Japan's early trade patterns with the United States, its competition with the United States. But beyond those traditional areas of work for Labor attaché offices, I became very much caught up in the political reporting on leftist worker organizations and political parties in connection with the whole drive of the left-wing to upset the stability of Japan which culminated in really large scale demonstrations against the conservative government in the spring and early summer of 1960. It was during those demonstrations that President Eisenhower's scheduled trip to Japan had to be called off because of all the instability.

Q: Did you run across this fellow--his obituary, I don't know where I picked it up--but Shikanai died a couple of years ago, founder of a Japanese media group which, I guess, was his vehicle to confront the communist-run labor unions, that he helped to destroy, virtually. I don't know whether that's true or not.

PETREE: Well, I don't think that's true. They're still in existence, but on the other hand he was very much a part of the general right-wing point of view which was dead-set against the liberal development of trade unions' strength in the Japanese economy, and in the society. His group was called the Sankei.

Q: Then it became Fiji-Sankei communications.

PETREE: That was when television came in.

Q: Then you had your own post. That's pretty good so early in your career.

PETREE: In 1960, partly because of all the reporting work I did on the left-wing movements during the upset period, Ambassador MacArthur selected me to be principal officer down in Fukuoka which was the southwestern-most constituent post in Japan. In those days we had a consulate of about 11 Americans, and 20 or so Japanese, and an American Cultural Center, a USIS post, with at times two Americans, and another 30 or 40 Japanese employees. So it was a fairly big post in terms of those small consulates. I also had in that consular district three large U.S. military bases.

Q: Oh, that must have been fascinating, and the problems of the military.

PETREE: And that was ,as it turned out, the real substance of what I did for the next three years.

Q: Liaison with the military. Well, that will teach you lessons in tact and diplomacy.

PETREE: Well, it is kind of a familiar problem for lots of people in the Foreign Service.

Q: That's right. But there must have been also a lot of consular work there--straight consular work in terms of registration of Americans.

PETREE: There was. In the district I had at that time something like 80,000 Americans living there.

Q: With dependents.

PETREE: ...marrying, and birthing, citizen work, plus, of course, there were the usual seaman cases and one thing and another that came because of the busy ports.

Q: I had that in Hamburg. Let's move on to your work on the desk in the Department. When did you get there?

PETREE: I went home in the late summer of 1963, and I was assigned as the officer in charge of Japanese Affairs. Under the old office system, you'll remember, within the Bureaus there was customarily an organization along lines of offices which combined

under each of the offices, contiguous or logically combinable country desks. In the case of the old FE structure, I was on the Japan desk along with China and Korea, and the three desks were headed up by an office director who reported to the Bureau level above us. Then in 1965 the Department changed the organization of the Bureaus, so that individual country desks were made country directorates with somewhat more senior officers appointed to head them, and theoretically a straighter shot, some authority, and some participation in policy formulation directly through the Bureau. There was no office level through which a desk had to negotiate its own concerns.

Q: That was quite a radical change, wasn't it, to have access to the Bureau level directly. There were a couple of big events which took place during your tour on the Japan desk. One of them was, of course, the reversion of Okinawa to...you presided over that, I gather.

PETREE: I can't say that I presided over it. In the first place, Dick Sneider, who was the first Country Director for Japan, was running that Okinawa show, and I was his deputy. So I was very much involved in it, obviously, and it was the major accomplishment of the whole four years that I spent on the desk. But, you'll remember that the timing was such that reversion itself didn't happen until 1972. I left the desk in 1967, and went off to the War College and then to Africa.

Q: After all your Japanese and Chinese language training, and Korean experience, how did you get shunted, shall we say, off to Africa?

PETREE: I asked for it, and the reason was simply that by 1968 when I finished the War College course, I had worked on Far Eastern affairs almost exclusively since 1943 and I thought I needed to look at some other part of the world. And by process of elimination I ended up in the African trip of the War College, and chose to go back when I was offered a job in Addis.

Q: There was a guy who was a political officer at the consulate in Hamburg, back around that time, 1965, who said, "There's a little bit of Africa in all our futures." So you went to Addis. How long were you there?

PETREE: I was there four years, and they got to be very, very long years because I had a hell of a time getting promoted. I was trying to make the break out of Class 3, the old Class 3, and it just didn't go very well with the assignments that I drew.

Q: Well, wasn't there a definite slow-down at that time, as I recall, in promotions?

PETREE: Generally speaking, I think that was true. I don't know whether it was all budgetary, or whether it was...

Q: I think it was policy. I've been reading about it recently in the Foreign Service Journal. Now, I notice you were doing AID work, at least part of it there, in Addis. Did you run across the fellow who was AID director in Addis? You probably weren't there...

PETREE: Roger Ernst was there when I was there.

Q: The guy is in our retired group in New York, Dick Cashin.

PETREE: Oh, I talked with him early on when the New York group started to meet again.

Q: He came into it.

PETREE: But we didn't cross-over in Addis. I think he was there earlier than I.

Q: Well, of course, I'm sure you kept up your contacts with the local Japanese just as I did with the Italians all over the world. Wherever I was stationed in the Service I always managed to get involved with the Italians because if you speak their language, you're persona grata to your colleagues; in your case the Japanese.

PETREE: Exactly so.

Q: So you kept up your contacts, and I presume also with the language. You finally did get back to the Far East though.

PETREE: That was because of Okinawan reversion in 1972 and I was picked up and sent on direct transfer.

Q: From Addis direct to Naha?

PETREE: Back to Naha. And I arrived there in early May just days before reversion on May 15th, 1972. I participated in the reversion ceremony down in Naha. I delivered greetings to the Okinawan people, in Japanese, which hadn't been done before. It made a stir in the press and it was fun to watch.

Q: Did you run into a guy named Jay Van Swekringen, or had he left already?

PETREE: Sure. Oh, he had left there but I had known him while I was on the desk, mostly because he was out there at that time.

Q: That's right, because I replaced him in Jakarta, originally as commercial attaché, but we didn't have any commercial business in Indonesia during the Sukarno period. Anyway, we eliminated the commercial attaché position, but I replaced him. He'd been in Indonesia for several years, and then he went off to Naha. That must have been a delicate business representing the American community. The Japanese, of course, I guess, were

happy to have Okinawa back as part of their country. How did you find the dealings with the Japanese went?

PETREE: That was smooth. That was the smaller part of the problem. There was tension between Okinawans and Japanese authorities in Tokyo, principally because Okinawans have always traditionally been treated as second-class citizens on ethnic grounds, if nothing else. They were terribly sensitive about how they would be treated in the new era after reversion. And there was a great deal of nervousness between the two of them in that early period when reversion occurred. And there still is, but it has settled down now, particularly, I think, smoothed out by the amount of money Japan has spent on trying to bring them up to speed. They've thrown a huge amount of central government funds into helping Okinawa get on its feet again.

But the big job that I'll never forget was dealing with Americans. Understand it was then the Vietnam war, and the focus of the military commanders, who were all very, very senior people, Marine, Air Force, Army and Navy, and they were all present on the island, and they'd been there for many, many years and had their own environment that they had built and hated to see it go. And for the most part were emotionally pitched against the State Department's foolishness of trying to give Okinawa back to the Japanese. So, the big tensions that I had to deal with were in every day's dealings with the feelings and the other preoccupations that the military commanders tried to protect. The general thing that never had occurred to me before, is that we Americans are no different than anybody else in the world. We form attachments for a territory, or a turf, and a place, just like the Panama Canal, and the Philippines more recently. But it was true in Okinawa too. We are colonialist just as much as anybody else, and that had never occurred...I always felt like that was one thing you could forget about. We Americans never did those bad things, never had those instincts that drove other nations. But it was true.

Q: We did give the Filipinos independence, and we did give the Cubans independence.

PETREE: The second thing I took away from that was how hugely valuable the War College experience was for me.

Q: Because you met the same people out in the field.

PETREE: Yes. The Marine commander was a guy in my class at the War College. And the Air Force guy was also the class after mine. But what's more important is there seemed to be a way to talk once you've been thrown together, and it helped immensely in trying to hold this show together for that first year.

Q: Well, now, rank-wise you were what, consul general?

PETREE: I was consul general, Class 2 officer at that point.

Q: So you ranked with brigadier general, didn't you?

PETREE: Yes, upper half.

Q: Plus your height, your 6 feet plus presence, shall we say. You must have pulled a little weight with the military.

PETREE: Well, sure you do. You know how they treat the Department. If anything, they're embarrassingly uneducated about who we are, where we came from, and they overdo it.

Q: I was always impressed with any military contact with how many of them had southern accents. I felt like an outsider right there. So then you went from Okinawa...did you get another direct transfer? Or did you go back to the Department?

PETREE: Direct transfer up to Tokyo, and that was part of the package, the agreement, to go back to Naha, take one year to set the consulate general up, and then I would be permitted to go back to my area of specialization in Tokyo which I did for three years.

Q: You were counselor for political affairs at that time. That must have been equally exciting, at least you got back into your area of primary interest.

PETREE: Yes, that was important to me because I'd been away for a long time.

Q: What happened of particular note? Let's put it this way, what was your greatest crisis, personally, as a counselor for political affairs? I don't mean on a personal life side; I mean in your job. Did you have a great DCM, to start with?

PETREE: Oh, yes. Tom Shoesmith was DCM for that period, and he and I are good friends, and were good friends. We went to Harvard together. He came out of DRF, just like I did. While you speak of crisis, I think that the one thing I remember was in 1974, or '75, just before President Ford was going to visit Tokyo, the first Presidential post-war visit, and, of course, he brought back to mind all of the troubles that Eisenhower ran into when his visit was canceled in 1960. So there was a lot of tension about whether the American President ought to be permitted to come in and out of Japan with no overlay of trouble and tension, and instability. The left-wing people jumped up again, and it was also during a period when we were building a new chancery. So we were living in, not a Quonset hut, but a temporary building near where the chancery was being built.

Q: Were you living, or working in it?

PETREE: Working, as a chancery. So some Japanese radicals, activists, stood up on the roof of the Okura Hotel, or near the roof, the 12th floor, and threw fire bombs onto the roof of the American embassy one afternoon. I was, I guess, the only senior officer in the building, and immediately after that they attempted to ram the gates of the embassy with a

truckload of people who were armed and out for no good. They did break into the compound and we were wrestling all over the parking lot.

Q: Were the Marines on hand?

PETREE: They were on hand helping, but, of course, the number on duty are not that many, and they're not armed. But nothing serious happened, it was just terribly...

Q: Did they tear down the flag and burn it?

PETREE: No, they didn't have time. We got them out of there before anything like that happened.

Q: The local police showed up?

PETREE: Yes, they came very quickly.

Q: That's very different from what it was in Indonesia in the mid-60s. The local protection didn't exist in Jakarta in those years. The crowds of paid protesters were storming the gates, and tearing down the flag and burning it.

PETREE: The serious part of the work for the political section during that period really was the movement in the U.S.-Japan relationship to try to renegotiate in great detail the terms of our base presence in Japan. This involved the effort to get Japan to pay more for keeping us there. They now, of course, over the years have continually moved the ratio of their subsidy of the base presence upward. I don't know what the current figures are, but it's something over half the total cost, and it's paid for by Japan, which most American people don't really know about.

Those negotiations, along with the different military rules of engagement, command and control understandings, etc., which came along with new weapons systems--there were missiles to be accounted for. There was a different kind of submarine war with the Soviets going on off Japan. And the ways of patrolling and protecting Japan in the light of all of these threats involved different uses of the bases than had ever been true before. And negotiating all of that was really what kept us up at night. And thirdly, I'd say, very closely related to this business of the pattern of the relations around our military presence, had to do with the rather rapid switch of our forces from conventional weapon systems to nuclear weapon systems. So that it no longer was possible to bring in Army units to do something without considering nuclear weapons problems. This changed the debate, the political exposure, the tensions between the two governments a great deal when we came to try to negotiate around these issues of nuclear powered warships, and nuclear weapons.

Q: Nuclear-powered submarines, were they allowed? And there was a base for nuclear powered...

PETREE: We eventually got the right for them to enter port, but it has only been in very recent years that one of them has been based in Japan, down in Sasebo, and I think it's still there. They've reactivated a support group down there.

Q: Well, of course, nuclear weapons is a very sensitive subject and I can't imagine very many other places quite as sensitive as it is in Japan.

PETREE: That's right.

Q: You had obviously a successful tour from your point of view, I think, in Tokyo that time. What did that lead to.

PETREE: Well, then one night about 3:00 in the morning I was called, without any warning whatsoever, by Bill Scranton, Governor Scranton, who was our representative at the UN at that time. He had been searching for a political counselor for the U.S. Mission to the UN (USUN), and he called me and asked if I'd be interested, and since by that time I'd been four years back in Japan, I really had to plan on going somewhere. I said, "Absolutely, I'd be interested." And he said, "Please come and talk." So I got on the first airplane out of Tokyo that noon and flew back and spent three or four days with him in New York, accepted the job, and picked up what I think was really the most educational experience I ever had in the Foreign Service, working at the UN.

Q: Of course that's a far cry from bilateral diplomacy, to multilateral diplomacy. That's a constant battle, I think, for some people who would rather be in bilateral.

PETREE: That's right. I didn't know this at the time when I accepted that assignment, but after I got into it I was constantly reminded, and amazed too, at the degree to which our system is biased in favor of bilateral relationships, and psychologically and emotionally tuned out of any previous positions to be friendly, or cooperative with the effort to build multilaterally. I think it's still true. I think this is a basic problem in the Service.

Q: I think it's a basic problem in the country perhaps too.

PETREE: Part of it is because our leadership talks against it. When our President wants to make something happen in the Gulf, or in Somalia, these days people say that we consult, and collaborate, and build UN coalitions, etc., but the fact of the matter is that when a President makes a decision, and we want to do something, we still do it. There is no inclination to factor a multilateral kind of approach into the way in which our policy is debated.

Q: That's very interesting. I found that, when I went to work in the Secretariat of the United Nations, I felt immediately at home in a multilateral context. Not that I was representing the United States, but just the sensation of a big world with a lot of countries, and a lot of people from those countries in New York. And you don't really feel terribly nationalistic, or you can't feel terribly nationalistic, in the UN context. I think

you're right. I think the U.S. sometimes has been using the UN as a figleaf. People sometimes think that the war in Korea was a UN operation. Well, it wasn't, as you know, and it's kind of hard to describe it to people who think so.

So, what sort of work were you doing at the UN?

PETREE: It was a terribly busy kind of assignment. In the first place, the administrations had changed. I went there in the spring and early summer of 1976 when Governor Scranton was still there, and he served the rest of the Ford administration which ran until mid-January the following year, and then it was Jimmy Carter who was elected. He ran the transition, and the new Permanent Representative was Andy Young, the first American black ever appointed to that job, and a relatively high-profile public figure, even before he started work at the UN, because of his years in Atlanta, and then as part of the Black Caucus in Congress.

One of the things that was a part of the learning experience was that transition. That was a very, very difficult time for me, and it had to do with things that are still mixed up in my mind and maybe it's too complicated to talk about here.

Q: No, I don't think so. Go ahead.

PETREE: I was virtually the only career officer who was left in the Mission when the administrations changed, by people who were quitting, going back to do other things, or Foreign Service personnel who had arranged their assignments onward, etc. And as sort of the memory box for the new Mission as it was made up, I was in a pretty favorable position. But it was very tense around the Mission in the early months because the new crowd that came in was hugely suspicious of anybody who had been there under a Republican administration. This is a story that all of us know, but it was the first time I had been in a place where a public figure of the likes of an Andy Young, and a politician like Andy, came in to be the lead figure in one of these transitions. So there was no cushioning the shock as I bumped up against egos, but also the political instinct to block out participation in the process by anybody who had not come with them along the route of election, or of service in Congress with Andy before, or to some extent, a black face. This was the first time I had ever run into this kind of thing, and the uncertainties about whether I would be accepted, whether I had the right to speak up, whether I would be invited to attend meetings, whether I should go across the street to the UN and conduct my business in the way in which I had been doing it. All of these questions introduced so many tensions into my life that I wonder I didn't have a stomach ulcer before it was over.

Q: I was going to ask you, didn't you get an ulcer?

PETREE: No, but I think it was a credit to Andy, and to some extent his crowd. Don McHenry was one of his deputies, and Bill Vanden Heuvel.

Q: I remember Vanden Heuvel; he was a classmate of mine at Cornell Law School.

PETREE: And the quality of those people eventually told. Andy was only there two years; in 1978 in his own decision he made contact with the PLO representative in New York one Sunday morning.

Q: Instead of going to church. He should have gone to church. Then it hit the fan, yes.

PETREE: Yes, it forced him out. Don McHenry took over from him. The work problems of the period were first and foremost Arab-Israeli, mostly Lebanon in those days. It was the time of ...

Q: ...first invasion of '78.

PETREE: ...when the Israelis first moved in, and then it was establishing UNIFIL, the UN force, and agonizing with the Lebanese about why they couldn't get their act together, and what are we going to do? Of course, we all know the aftermath and the pain, and the terrible history of that. That's what I was working with.

Q: You were particularly working on Security Council affairs, is that right?

PETREE: That's right.

Q: And by that time you also had your rank of ambassador. What year did that come about?

PETREE: '78.

Q: We let the tape run out and we talked a little after that so we will now resume on the other side of the tape.

Dick, the tape stopped, and you were talking about McHenry and your job as the Security Council man, Lebanon, and all that. You were there when Jeane Kirkpatrick came in, I take it. Was it somewhat the same operation for you, the tension because of the change from one administration to another? Would you care to comment on that?

PETREE: Oh, very much so. It was a very tense time. Once again, I got stranded as the memory box for the Mission. I was one of the senior officers at least who was left behind when administrations changed. Which I think is probably a pretty good idea, but it does create a lot of tension for the person involved. In any event, I found that with Jeane the ideological nervousness about somebody from the old administration was even stronger, if anything. I guess I would say, not so much Jeane Kirkpatrick, as the people she brought along. There were a number of younger people who came with her from Georgetown where she had been teaching, and those peoples' attitudes were very hostile toward what we had been doing as a Mission, or what the U.S. had been doing as policy at the UN during the previous administration. And they set out to change it, root, stock and formula.

And I couldn't agree with many of their points of view. I saw myself concentrating on making sure that Ambassador Kirkpatrick understood how the UN was operating in relation to whatever the problem of the moment. And rather than arguing policy or reaction, to make sure that she was able to think through all of the probable alternatives from the U.S. point of view, and not be swept along by a group of advisors who only had one kind of a coloration in the way in which they thought and talked.

It was also kind of a sad time for me because the new crowd that came in with Reagan...you'll remember that spring of 1981, late winter and spring, the new administration just like this present administration, announced that they're not going to do anything about anything until they have had a chance to study it, and all the world is waiting until...

Q: Came to a halt while they're studying.

PETREE: That was so frustrating because the places like Cambodia, and Namibia, and Lebanon, and all the other places in the world simply were not going to wait for some new finding by an administration.

Q: Well, of course, what developed shortly after that was the Nicaraguan situation, that really in my view, Jeane Kirkpatrick was kind of a spokeswoman for a policy which I thought absolutely abhorrent. And then when we walked out of the International Court of Justice in a huff because we didn't want out policies examined by any such body as the International Court of Justice.

PETREE: All of this, what happened in UNESCO, what happened everywhere through the whole system with our presence, and our style, our reputation, I found very troublesome. But I'll tell you, I think in looking back, there were some good things that happened because Kirkpatrick came to town. One of them was that her training, and her skills as an academician, meant that she was very comfortable in dealing seriously with words, unlike most politically appointed Permanent Representatives who very easily tended, at least, to fall into the blabbing that goes on in the UN where everybody tells themselves, "Well, this is the style, and if we don't blabber regardless of whether it means anything, it's not going to fit the way things are done up there, and in any event it doesn't make any difference, why not?" The looseness, the way in which we formulated statements on behalf of the United States. You go back into the record and start reading them...I think she was a cut above almost everybody who ever preceded her in that job, except maybe Adlai Stevenson.

Q: Well, he had a pretty good facility with words himself.

PETREE: She cared a great deal about it, and she fought these problems of wording and expression.

Q: That's what it's all about.

PETREE: I thought that was, in general, a net plus. A second thing that I've thought in retrospect, made me uncomfortable at the time; maybe you'll laugh when I tell you about it. I think that, although it wasn't all personally Jeane Kirkpatrick, it was the Reagan administration, the Republican kind of way of looking at the world, I think, as I look back on it. I think she taught me something about the extent to which the United States can and should be negative in the way in which it responds in a place like the UN. We ought to make the tough speech without necessarily huge emotion. We ought to tell people exactly why what they're saying, or what they're doing, what they're proposing, is wrong, and we ought to withhold our vote. We ought to vote the way we really think, and not fall in with some kind of a majority to make the wheels go around. I think her willingness to hold out in many, many tense negotiations, resolutions, or this or that, the tactics of each problem as they worked their way out. I think it was generally a good lesson for me. I had always felt that the United States really couldn't afford to take a tough posture beyond a certain point because our big hope would be to lead the rest of the world, and bring them along, in a sense. If we take too tough a position, a negative position, the atmosphere of what goes on in the UN, people would tend to fall away from us. I think, among other things, what she taught me was that we ought to be more tough-minded in the way in which we conduct ourselves in the multilateral environment. And we ought to say no if that's what we really believe. We ought not be apologetic about it, we ought to be prepared to explain exactly why and not play tactical games about it. But we ought to be prepared, and willing, to say "no" more often than it was my perception we had done in the past.

Q: I don't think we ought to shrink from a leadership role in the UN. In fact sometimes I think we're too self-assertive in taking a leadership role when we're not sure we have the other important parts of the world with us. So you retired in 1981, and obviously you didn't really retire because you got another job. What was that job?

PETREE: I accepted a position as president of the United States-Japan Foundation which was then, in 1981, just in the process of organization, and in fact did start operations on June 1st, 1981.

Q: So you didn't even get home leave.

PETREE: No, I didn't get much of a holiday. I went to work for them and it was back again to my Japan roots, and that's what was really attractive about it for me.

Q: Of course, sounds ideal.

PETREE: You know, a professional base from which I could work at it in a useful kind of a way. My object then in those years was to do something about the terrible tensions that were building between the U.S. and Japan. We perceived then that that was a new level of tension we were facing, and if we didn't do something about the level of communication, of understanding, of education, that transpired between the two countries, we were going to let this relationship run itself into the ground, and that, we thought, was bad. The

Japanese side agreed with it, and the Japanese conservative establishment proposed to use a one-time gift, and the money was put forward by Ryoichl SasaKawa, who is still alive, who was the chairman of the Japan Shipbuilding Industry Foundation. He gave a gift of 10 billion yen, which in the exchange rate at the time was about $46 million dollars, and that was transferred to us in four equal annual installments. And so after the first four years we've built up a principal which, with our investment and management of the fund, gradually built up to about where it is now, which is around $90 million dollars. And an annual operating budget as a foundation, making grants, giving money away to help people do things that might be useful in this relationship, an operating program budget of somewhere around $7 or $8 million a year.

Q: Now is that mainly directed to education of young people?

PETREE: It's several different things. We started out to service all the felt needs that the community had in those days for exchange of persons activities generally at various levels, and specialized groups, etc. We barred ourselves from dealing with student exchange just because there were other groups specializing in that, and instead we tried to pick up people from the societies on each side to build a broader extension of the interchange that might be carried on with short term visitor kinds of exchanges.

Secondly, we set about the business--the first time, no other organization had ever tackled this--to do something about the level of teaching about Japan in our public school system all over the country. Actually I got interested in it because of work that had been done in the graduate school at Stanford where they had run a program in 13 contiguous counties around the San Francisco Bay area near Palo Alto, to train public school teachers to teach about Japan in a more sensible way. And they were beginning to have some impact in that localized area. We went to them and asked whether they could replicate themselves in the country, and ultimately they agreed to manage the expansion of this program to a western area which would cover ten of the states in the west of the country.

Q: Who also have a local Japanese population?

PETREE: Not necessarily. We're interested in Americans, whether there are any Japanese living around there or not, Americans who are going to have to be involved with Japan in the future, who were not getting any kind of preparation in the K-through-12 education system of our public schools. We didn't do a thing with private schools at all. They came along later and were very interested, and still are very interested in upgrading their education capacity to deal with Japan. But we dealt through regional centers. There is one at Stanford, there is one at Hawaii, there was one ultimately at the University of Washington. There was another one at the University of Indiana, another one at the University of Minnesota, one at Columbia, one in the Carolinas, etc.; there are several others. So now we have blanketed all 50 states with regional ongoing programs for engaging the teachers in real time training, teaching about Japan. From each of these regional organization networks, it involves a group of key teachers going to Japan every summer, spending a month or more.

The third thing that we tried to do with the Foundation was to do something about the lack of any senior network dialogue between the two countries. People who can talk about the problems at a senior national level. We set up what I called in those days, core groups, small senior expert groups to operate over a 3, 4, 5 year period exchanging back and forth a couple times a year, or more, to deal with, for example, broad topics like energy. What do the two biggest users of energy in the world think ought to be the look forward between us. How can we cooperate? How can we deal with obvious problems, energy, not only nuclear, but also fossil fuels, etc. We set up one to talk about how we, U.S. and Japan, look at the Soviet Union right after Gorbachev came up. And we spent three or four years finding out that we had vastly different attitudes toward Russia than we had supposed when we began, and I think it was well worth the investment. Bob Legvold of the Harriman Institute at Columbia, headed the U.S. panel that met on these subjects, and a professor then at a University in Japan, headed the Japanese side. It was a very useful thing.

Since then this general idea of examining problem areas, or sectors, of our relationship together in that way is still going on.

Q: You don't see much hope for increased understanding if you read the newspapers, particularly about the trade disputes.

PETREE: That's right. We've got several of those going too.

Q: It doesn't seem to be producing much in the way of harmony, I would say, at this point. Dick, before we leave the general area of U.S. diplomatic relations with Japan, let me ask you about the apparent intent of the United States to support an amendment of the charter to provide at least for seats on the Security Council of both Japan and Germany. There's a lot of cynicism about this stance by the United States. Notice I used the word apparent support for their membership because it could be that the U.S. knows full well that no such thing will happen because at least two other permanent members of the Security Council probably would not support it, particularly on condition they might have to lose their veto power. How do you feel about the possibility of amending the charter to provide seats for Japan and Germany, and probably some developing country members too. I don't know whether that will get support or not, but do you think the U.S. is serious about this?

PETREE: I think the U.S. is serious. I think there's no cynicism. In the first place, it's an old position; we've said this for a long time over many administrations. But, of course, it's never been this close to reality in various ways as it is now. I think that we have to do this. It's in our interests, maybe more than anybody else in the world as a matter of fact, that Japan be given a role, particularly a role through the UN above all. All of the worries about ultimately what the end gain will be of Japan's emergence from World War II; or Germany's for that matter, though it's a totally different case. But I think it's in our interest to ensure that those countries, just to begin with, are afforded some way to live, and

operate, and satisfy national aspirations within the framework of the UN. I don't think that the way in which the UN is developing, particularly with the disappearance of the Soviet adversary, that the veto carries with it the same emotional wallop that it used to. I don't know where that will end up, but I think the way in which we have to think about the veto, makes it conceivable to me within this coming period of history, that we, and the British, and the French, and everybody else that are going to change the way in which we think about what's called the veto. You know it hasn't been used in the last couple of years.

Q: No, not yet, because some of those issues haven't really come up, issues on which the United States has traditionally used its veto, and that's certainly an Arab-Israeli problem. How does the United States convince the British and the French to not oppose an amendment in the charter which they could easily do under the amendment procedure. You have to have the positive votes, affirmative votes, of all five of the current permanent members. So all one Permanent Member has to do is abstain, for example, and it's down the tubes.

PETREE: I personally think that the German and Japanese seats will be decided in the context of a package which includes other countries too. I think the idea of a regional permanent membership, say an India, or a Brazil, or Nigeria, who all have been mentioned in the context of this debate. That will once again to some degree, change the cold water: that is, the decision to admit Germany and Japan per se. Secondly, I think the passage of time, and the wrestling of the UN with things like the Bosnia problem, and the whole rebuilding of the concepts of peace-keeping, peace-making, and-enforcing, on all of this that in the end it has the effect of changing the framework within which even the Brits and the French think about this. I think they will in the end have to admit that it is not in their interest to cast the black ball against change per se, because they can't stop the implications of the second largest economy in the world, and the largest creditor nation in the world, and the engine of European growth and development. They cannot stop the effects of this historically.

Q: That's going to take a long time though, in my view.

PETREE: Yes, and there's always going to be a bind as far as we're concerned about how long? How long can we keep saying to the Japanese, "Yes, yes, we're with you but..." And that's always going to be too.

Q: I must say I was impressed that our interview was scheduled for today because I couldn't help looking at the paper...today's page 2 of the Times has two articles on Japan, I guess because of last week's election in which the Liberal Democratic party suffered substantial losses. Now, I don't know how substantial they are because it looks, according to this article, as though there might be a possibility of some kind of continuation. They still have a majority, I gather. No, I'm sorry, lost its majority, but on the other hand there isn't a real united opposition to the former government.

PETREE: They lost their so-called majority. You understand what they had before was enough people within the discipline of their one party to carry any measure by a majority vote, that the absolute majority of the total 511 seat lower house is what they lost. Now they have to join with somebody else to make up the 226.

Q: It says they have 223 of the 511 seats.

PETREE: So it would be 256, is what's involved.

Q: Yes, they need that many more votes.

PETREE: That's right. I've been talking to Japanese friends on the phone, and here in town in the last few days, trying to figure out what they think is happening. Nobody seems very confident that they do know. Jerry Curtis, who is a professor friend up at Columbia, is quoted as saying that this is real. That this is really a benchmark event that's going on now. That the old party is dead, and there is going to have to be a restructuring of the whole political system. I admire him, and I have great respect for his judgment, and I think one ought to pay attention to that. But nobody is sure of that judgment yet. I think that it's going to take quite a long time, and that the intervening period is going to be one of instability, of domestic chaos, politically and in other ways, within Japan. But the drift is going to be away from the control of that political party. And I think that's probably true.

Q: Well, it's probably also good. I mean, its been 38 years in power.

PETREE: Since 1955.

Q: Well, that's 38 years. Isn't that a long time? It's true that the Christian Democrats were in power for a very long time in Germany, but eventually they had to give way to the Socialist, who were not very much socialist. I think the change is there, and it's good. I think it's healthy. I hope it's healthy. Certainly you can't say that the Liberal Democratic party has had a distinguished record in recent years with all the scandals that have broken out. I think they have to have younger people...

PETREE: From our point of view, it's going to be a great adjustment that we have to make when this party ceases to govern in the way in which it always has before. It's not that we have done anything wrong to my knowledge at all in maintaining them in power, but it is that with the familiarity, and the long years of working out all of the lines of communication, and the style of communication, and the formulas of agreement that have been worked out about all manner of problems, large and small, have been very much in the American national interests. It has worked. The policies that brought us into close cooperation with that conservative party, and the conservative government, have resulted in a post-war era in the Pacific which has been largely successful in terms of U.S. policy, despite a couple of wars, and the troubles, and the worries, etc., the fact of the matter is the troubles that we perceived at the outset of that period just haven't come to pass

because of the stability of the Japanese development, of the Japanese leadership, sensibleness of their ideas about their own domestic policies and management, and their relationships with us and with the rest of the outside world. I think all of that has been well done. So while some of us, I think, agree that it's high time change came, I think we'd better be prepared for a lessening of the stability. It's going to be a more awkward, difficult, uncertain, kind of a connection that we have to manage than it has been in the past.

Q: It's very interesting to see what's going to happen, to see what will happen, and I'm sure you're following it very closely with your tremendous background in the country, and its affairs and its attitudes.

Dick, I think we should bring this to a close because we've been at it now for nearly two hours. I have to say that I personally appreciate very much your doing this, and I'm sure that the Association for Diplomatic Studies will likewise be glad to have your comments on the record, and available to those who get involved in research in the history side of our particular Foreign Service policies, and foreign relations. So thank you very much. We're bringing this interview to a close on the 22nd of July, 1993. Dick, glad to have you here.

PETREE: Thank you very much.

Q: I mean that sincerely.

End of interview