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

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GASTON J. SIGUR, JR.

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: I might mention that Gaston was in at the birth of this oral history program when it started at George Washington University. Gaston, I wonder if you could give me a bit of your background before we get into your overseas experience. Where did you come from, education and that sort of thing.

SIGUR: Well, I was born and raised in Franklin, Louisiana, a small town. I went briefly to Louisiana State University, 1941-43. I started there at the age of 16. And then, of

course, the war came and I went into the Army in 1943. And after basic training, that's when I began to study Japanese.

Q: They grabbed you out for Japanese training.

SIGUR: They grabbed me out for Japanese training. So I sort of continued that all the way through the war years.

Q: Where did they send you?

SIGUR: They sent me originally to the University of Chicago. Then I did some other things in the Army, briefly, and then went on to continue the study of Japanese at the University of Michigan and then at Fort Snelling, in Minneapolis, where I was commissioned. By that time, the war was over. Then I went over to Japan in the occupation and spent a year there.

Q: What were you doing?

SIGUR: I was the intelligence officer for Tachikawa Air Base. As you know, of course, in those days there was no separate Air Force. So I was attached to the Army- Air Force and stayed there almost all of 1946, then came back and got discharged.

I didn't have my BA yet, so I decided to get my BA and go on and get an MA degree in area studies, Asia. I went to the University of Michigan, where I had been for a year during the war (or nine months, whatever it was). I went back there and I got my BA and my MA and my Ph.D. from Michigan, in History.

Q: But you were keeping up with your Japanese?

SIGUR: I was keeping up with the Japanese all the time. Later, I was in Japan from 1956 to '61 with the Asia Foundation and then at Sophia University.

Q: I wonder if you could talk a little about that. You were at the Asia Foundation, and then you were in Sophia University in Tokyo from '59 to '61. Could you tell me your impressions of Japan at that time, sort of a formative period.

SIGUR: Japan was moving out from under the occupation (the occupation ended in '52). And Japan was beginning to feel her way into the post-war world as an independent country-- closely allied with the United States, of course.

I think that's one of the significant factors here, that since that period of time, when the occupation ended, the governments of Japan and the people of Japan, in their election process, have all strongly reinforced the tie with the United States. This has been absolutely key in terms of their foreign policy and the way in which their foreign policy is

made and implemented. It is, first and foremost, the United States-Japanese relationship that affects the minds of the policy makers. So I think that's very important.

But also, of course, by 1956 one could begin to see the Japanese economy rising quite rapidly. There had been great devastation caused by the war. Immediately following the war, one saw devastation all over the country. But by '56 this had clearly begun to disappear. Rebuilding had taken place, new businesses were going up. You got a sense of vitality. This is not surprising, given the fact that the Japanese educational system was one of the best in the world. The literacy rate was almost a hundred percent, even in the pre-war days in Japan. Training was very good. The United States contributed mightily to the Japanese economic development and one got a sense of things moving forward. You could see again the rising of Japan.

Q: What was your impression when you were in Sophia University (this was one of the top universities in Japan) of the student body as far as its attitude towards outside Japan and particularly the United States?

SIGUR: It's hard for me to say too much about that, because I didn't see that many of the students. I was engaged in a research project there with a group of Japanese professors.

Q: Well, to move on. You were in Afghanistan from '62 to '66 with the Asia Foundation. What was the Asia Foundation doing, both in Japan and Afghanistan? What type of work was this?

SIGUR: Well, it was education, broadly defined. The programs were quite different in Japan and Afghanistan. After all, Japan was a wide-open, democratic society. Afghanistan was an authoritarian society, under a king. It was moving toward a constitutional monarchy when we were there, so things were beginning to open up. But it was a different modus operandi in both places. In Afghanistan, which was, of course, quite far back in time in terms of development, the Asia Foundation there did most of its work in providing advisors to Afghan institutions. For instance, we had several advisors at the University of Kabul, helping them build up the university in the area of science--a science department--also in the area of sports. And we had advisors in the government. Advisors in the Ministry of Commerce, trying to broaden Afghanistan's export markets and this sort of thing. So that was the kind of thing we did in Afghanistan.

In Japan, it was providing support to individuals, individual professors mainly, coming to this country, studying in this country, that sort of thing. And this was an essential part of institution building for democratic permanence. We did quite a bit in the area of law education, legal education and so forth.

Two kinds, as I say, different programs, geared to the different stages of development in both countries. Of course, as we worked in Japan, obviously we began to think more in terms of ways in which we could cooperate with the Japanese in perhaps doing work

together in other developing countries that needed assistance, so that the Japanese could also provide funds together with The Asia Foundation.

Q: Well, now, we'll move quite rapidly up to your time in dealing with the government when you were with the National Security Council, from 1982 to '86. How did you get into that job, and what were you doing?

SIGUR: I served as a foreign policy advisor to then- candidate George Bush, beginning in late 1979 when he began to run for the Republican nomination for the presidency. He wrote me a letter and asked if I would serve in a foreign policy advisory capacity, and I said I would. I liked him, and I thought it would be a good thing to do. Of course, I was here at George Washington University at the time.

And then, after Ronald Reagan got the nomination and Bush the nomination for vice president, I was asked if I would join the foreign policy team for them, and I did. And so I became one of a few who dealt largely with Asia. This was a small coterie of about six, I think. And we advised the Reagan-Bush ticket on Asian affairs. After Reagan won the election, I made it clear that I wasn't interested in serving in the government, that I preferred to stay at the university.

But then, in the spring of 1982, the then-national security advisor, Judge William Clark, called me and asked me if I would consider coming over to the National Security Council and working for him and with him, being the president's man for Asia, so to speak.

Now I had met President Reagan two or three times before. Actually, I think once during the campaign and then a couple of times before he had been nominated, when he was out of the governorship in California, when he was, I think, a fellow at the Hoover Institution.

So I said I'd think about it, that I really wasn't too interested in coming in the government. But he pressed and said why don't I sit down with him and with the president and talk about it, so I did. So I allowed as how I would probably take this on for a little while.

One of the big things taking place at that time was the negotiations with China for a new agreement with China, specifically on the sale of arms to Taiwan. And so I become very much involved in that.

Q: This was American sales to Taiwan, and the People's Republic was obviously not pleased with this.

SIGUR: We were trying to reach an agreement with the People's Republic of China as to the continuation of these sales and how this would be worked out.

I went into the National Security Council as the head of Asian Affairs shortly after the Fourth of July in 1982. This was, interestingly enough, about the same time that Al Haig left the State Department and George Shultz came in as secretary of state.

My immediate work was going ahead with the communiqué which was finally signed with the Chinese on August 17, 1982.

The State Department, of course, was fundamentally responsible for the negotiations with the Chinese, and our ambassador in Beijing, Art Hummel, was our main negotiator.

But at the National Security Council, of course, I kept the national security advisor fully informed of what was going on, and the president as well, because the president was very much interested in this personally.

He wanted to establish a good working relationship with the People's Republic of China. Our government believed that this was very important, and that the policy of trying to help China with its modernization plans should be pursued. Therefore the president and secretary of state wanted to try to put this issue of Taiwan on a quiet, less noisy basis, because this obviously was a matter of concern to both the PRC and to Taiwan.

The president was determined that the Taiwan Relations Act would be fully carried out, and that the good, close ties that the people of Taiwan and the people of the United States had, one toward the other, would be maintained, and that any resolution of the issue of Taiwan and the People's Republic of China be settled peacefully. This was absolutely key to our thinking.

I believe that we, in the final communiqué which we signed with the Chinese in mid-August, satisfied both of the aims and goals of the president. And I want to emphasize how closely involved he was in these negotiations.

Q: This is interesting, because there is sort of the impression that the president was very much a letting the boys do it, more or less, and staying out of it.

SIGUR: That's not really accurate. The president was very much involved himself. I know this, because I was involved with him. And with Judge Clark. And, of course, I worked very closely with John Holdridge, who was assistant secretary of state at the time, and others in the State Department on it. Because, as I say, they were in front on this, and this is what they were doing. But the president was very much interested in this and read very carefully everything involved.

And, of course, as you can imagine, as we got closer and closer to the final decisions on it, there was some bickering over words, and what words meant, and what phrases meant, and so forth and so on. The president was very anxious to be kept fully informed on all of this. And he had his own views.

Q: In the first place, this agreement sounds like we're almost giving up our own sovereignty. After all, we have relations, whatever you want to call them, with Taiwan, even though it's this sort of quasi thing.

SIGUR: That's right. Unofficial, unofficial.

Q: But it's there. And to have another power essentially have, if not a veto, to find ourselves trying to work with this. It makes sense, but at the same time, it's odd.

SIGUR: Well, I understand. And there is a problem with it. I think all of us that were involved in this recognized that problem, that this is difficult.

But we tried. And I think if you read the communiqué itself, and if you read the statement that was put out by the president when the communiqué was made public, you can see that fundamentally we achieved the goals we wanted to achieve.
We refused to agree to any date certain for ending the sale of arms to Taiwan. We agreed that these would be reduced over a period of time, with no specified amount. And we have lived up to that agreement. We have reduced them. At the same time, we have continued on. And we have very good relations with Taiwan, extremely good. We also got from the Chinese what we considered to be their commitment not to use force to resolve the issue.

Q: You removed Quemoy, Matsu, Formosa Straits, the whole business.

SIGUR: That they would not use force. In the accompanying statement by the president, at the time of the communiqué, he made that very clear, that he would never have agreed to the communiqué without what we considered to be the Chinese acceptance that there would be no use of force. So that, in a way, what we did in this thing was to formalize, so to speak, the American determination and the Chinese acquiescence. Now sometimes they'd quibble on this one, but we believed the Chinese acquiescence not to use force.

Q: Well, they haven't.

SIGUR: They have not, and the situation is very calm. Look at what's happening. Look at the development. Look at all of the Taiwanese who are going to China to visit. Hundreds of thousands have so far gone to China. Look at the economic relations between the two. Four billion dollars last year. Through Hong Kong. Unofficial, all of it is unofficial. But moving. Things have changed. This is a peaceful atmosphere that we're talking about and what we hoped would be the result of the August 1982 communiqué.

Q: Well, let me ask a question then. You went through this thing, and I can't help but think that, ok, we do this, and yet at the same time, we have it almost something where the same type of thing could be used very nicely, maybe not easily but nicely, and that is India-Pakistan. We were shoving a lot of arms into Pakistan, which enrages the Indians. Did anybody, while you were in the NSC, ever say, hey, how about this, and maybe we can do something? Or was that just not ever considered a somewhat parallel situation?

SIGUR: Well, I, of course, was not involved in India- Pakistan.

Q: Well, I was wondering whether anybody was thinking about this, as trying to use this maybe as a...

SIGUR: I don't recall anything of that sort. It's very interesting that you raise that. I don't recall anybody seeing a particular parallel, because, of course, the Taiwan-China situation is so special, in a way. It's a rather unique situation.

Our relationship with Taiwan was something about which the Chinese would say, "Why do you have to maintain this relationship?"

And we said, "Look, we've been friends for a long time, and you must understand that. This is something rooted in history."

The Chinese understand that. That's one thing that they use often when they talk about things that they do that we don't particularly care for. And they say, "But you see, this is rooted in history. We have these historical ties." This is one thing they would understand.

But I do think, just in getting back to your point there, it just seems to me that there are great differences here, but on the other hand...

Q: There are differences, but...

SIGUR: I see your point, perhaps, but I don't recall that it was thought of in that way, as far as I know.

Q: What was your impression of the Chinese negotiators?

SIGUR: Their chief negotiator was Han Shu, who later became ambassador here. He was sort of the equivalent of Hummel, in that sense, though they had others as well. And, of course, just as in our case, as they moved along, Deng Xiaoping was kept fully informed, and he was involved in terms of decisions, just as the president was. This was something that top leaders of both countries felt very deeply about, because it was sort of setting the pattern for the future. I think both leaderships understood that. As I say, in my view, I think it worked out rather well.

Q: What was your impression of the National Security Council, particularly in this early time when you first came in, with Judge Clark? Looking at it from the outside, Judge Clark came from a legal background in California, with no pretensions to international experience, and was put into this key slot. Now he was very close to the president, which always is a major plus. How did he handle the staff, and how effective do you think he was in the time he was there?

SIGUR: I thought he was very effective. I had great respect for him. I think that it is true he was no specialist on foreign policy. But we do have to remember that, before he went

over to the NSC as national security advisor, he served for almost a year and maybe longer than that as deputy secretary of state. So he did get involved and did know, based on a year's experience, of the major issues facing the country.

But most important, I think, as you say, he was close to the president and he had the confidence of the president, and he knew what he didn't know, and consequently I think he used his staff quite effectively by calling on his staff all the time. I really feel that he did a fine job as national security advisor. I worked personally very well with him and became quite close to him. He and I are good friends.

Q: He wasn't there too long. And then one has the feeling, because of things that have come out with the Iran- Contra Affair, that somehow the National Security Council became almost (and please correct me if I'm wrong), not a rogue elephant, but it became very operational. It was filled with can-do people, many of them Marines. I'm sorry, I don't mean to be pejorative, but it is this idea, well, these bureaucrats get in the way, and we'll do it, and we can produce. Did you feel any of this as you got involved and could see the changes?

SIGUR: Well, I think you always have this sort of attitude, probably, between the National Security staff and other elements of the government. After all, the National Security staff is sort of the personal staff of the president in terms of foreign policy and security affairs. And you get quite a few young people in there without the experience that age brings, and the wisdom (I think I can say that at my age) that age brings. So one is careful about and one doesn't get big-headed about things.

Some of the young people, I think, tend to have that happen to them. It's natural, in a way. That's one of the problems of working in the White House. You have this sense of being close to the president personally, even though you may not deal with him on a continuing basis. But nonetheless you're sort of his people, and so you have that.

Now, of course, we have to understand that quite a number of members of the National Security staff were career people, from the State Department and from the Defense Department (not all Marines). So I certainly never saw it as a rogue elephant, but I didn't know everything that was going on, you understand. But at the same time, one can say that taking actions of some kind that we've seen examples of were probably unwise at the time. I don't know. That's always a problem, I suppose, when you look at things.

On the other hand, in the past you've seen things of that sort. After all, in terms of the Iran hostage situation when President Carter tried to get the Americans out, that was pretty much run by Zbig Brzezinski and his people at the National Security Council. So it's not new. These things are done. And sometimes errors of judgment are made, which are very unfortunate.

I personally must say that in terms of what I knew and my own participating in developments in Asian policy and the implementation of these policies, and I worked as

closely as possible with the State Department, with the assistant secretary for East Asia and the Pacific and his people, with the Defense Department, with the intelligence agencies, with Commerce and with USTR on the economic side, I worked as closely as possible with these bureaus and people. We had a very good, close working relationship, and I don't think anyone felt that the National Security Council was, in any way, at least in the Asian area, trying to force anything down anybody's throat. That was not the case.

Q: Well, I had an interview just about ten days ago with Marshall Brement, a Foreign Service officer who served in the National Security Council under Brzezinski in the previous administration, who was saying that there was a major problem with the State Department. That when they would ask for something, they would get a briefing or a guidance or something about the president going to do this on a trip and all. They would get a tome back, which was absolutely almost valueless, because it included everybody's comments. And so it would end up with somebody, who was basically a staff of one, sitting down by himself and writing instructions or guidance to the president on a one-pager. Did you find this bureaucratic responsiveness a problem?

SIGUR: There was a certain problem with that on occasion. But I'll tell you, I believe that the way in which we worked in the Asia and Pacific area was perhaps somewhat unique. I was special assistant to the president for Asian affairs, and I had Paul Wolfowitz over as assistant secretary most of the time, and Richard Armitage over in Defense as assistant secretary for ISA, and his people on Asia, and people in the State Department on Asia.

While you do have a problem with bureaucratic slowness in terms of getting things to the president, the way you have to get around that is to do things personally. You've got to call. I'd call Paul and I'd say, "Look, Paul, the president has to do this by the day after tomorrow. I don't have time to go through all the foolishness. Now let's understand where we're going, and get your DAS for, let's say, China or Japan or wherever, to work out a little something. Get it over to me somehow, so that I can have that." Now granted, that's not through all the bureaucratic channels, but we did that, and we worked closely together as people. Now that's one of the problems, you get people who don't work like that.

Q: Well, maybe this was because you were older and could sit down and talk to people. Whereas if you get some young hotshot who has a tendency to fire off orders and who is not able, almost chemically, to have a rapport with other people, he's not going to be able to work this out.

SIGUR: I think that's right. I must say, having never been in the government before '82, I came to have tremendous respect for the career people in the government. I'm talking about in foreign policy, and specifically in the area of Asia and the Pacific, which is where I worked. I came to have tremendous respect for these people, in the State Department, in the Defense Department, in other areas of the government. But particularly those two. They work hard, and they are very knowledgeable, and they know, and they understand, and they want to serve the country. That's what they're there for.

It just seems to me that you've got to understand that you must work together. It's the only way you're going to get things done, and the only way you're going to get things done satisfactorily for the president. After all, he's the one we're all serving. He's the elected official, he's the one the American people have put in, and so we've got to serve that. We've got to serve him and the people, and that's what we're there for.

And I feel that there's this tremendous sense of service within the career service of our country, in the foreign policy area, as I say. And I came to have great respect for the people who work in these things. And so, as a consequence, I did everything possible never to bypass them in any way if I could avoid it. Bypassing people was not beneficial, certainly, to what I was trying to do, and it wasn't beneficial to the president. I was not serving properly if I bypassed people who had special and broad knowledge, people who had things to say.

Q: It sounds also like you, and the people you were dealing with, didn't have something which unfortunately exists--an ego problem.

SIGUR: Well, you find those things, so you work around it or work with it somehow.

President Reagan used to have something on his desk in the Oval Office which we all would comment on, this little statement as people are wont to have, which said, "You can accomplish almost anything if you don't care who gets the credit." By God, it's absolutely true. We all know that. There's nothing new about this.

But all I'm saying is that really was the way I tried to approach my job. And I think that most of the people with whom I worked, again in the Asia and Pacific area in our government, approached it the same way.

Q: Well, let's look at some of the things in the Asia and Pacific area. The major one at that period was really the situation in the Philippines, wasn't it?

SIGUR: That became so. That was not quite so when I first came in. That became so in a couple of years.

Q: What were some of the problems?

SIGUR: Let me mention one thing. I felt very deeply that we had not as strongly emphasized the U.S.-Japan relationship, that we had been somewhat mesmerized by China, with the opening to China under Nixon and Kissinger, and continuing on with that through the Ford and Carter administrations. Nothing wrong with that; I support fully the opening to China and the way in which we pursued our policy. But I thought that in some ways we had tended to neglect the Japan relationship, which, it seemed to me, was becoming more and more significant to us--certainly in the trade area but also in the security side as well--and that we therefore had to take some rather special steps. And so I

recommended to the national security advisor and the president and the secretary of state that we take conscious steps to do this.

I saw an opportunity at the end of 1982, with the coming into office of a new prime minister in Japan, Mr. Nakasone. It was a good time for the president and Nakasone to establish a close personal working relationship, that this really had never been the case between a Japanese prime minister and an American president, and that, given the importance and significance of Japan, we should move in that direction. So we did.

And this was something, I might say, that the president and Secretary Shultz and Judge Clark jumped on rather enthusiastically. They felt that Japan was clearly a very key country, as far as the United States was concerned, and was going to become more so, and that we did have burgeoning problems with Japan on the trade front and all of this, and that therefore we had to make every effort to strengthen the ties between our two countries. We were, after all, in a state of alliance.

So I would put that down as one of the first decisions on Asia, let's say, that was made after I came into office, and with Secretary Shultz when he came in. Not to say that in any way we diminished the China relationship, that is not true, but at the same time, we emphasized and tried to build up the Japan relationship.

Q: Was this partly an evaluation of Nakasone? Because Nakasone did seem to be, perhaps with the exception of Tanaka, a different breed of cat than the normal person who comes up through the Japanese escalator to become prime minister. Most of these are kind of, nonentities isn't the right term, but...

SIGUR: I know what you mean--somewhat typical. That's quite right, part of it was that.

When it became rather clear that Nakasone was going to be the next prime minister of Japan (before he was actually chosen, but there was little doubt he was going to be chosen), the president sent me to Japan to talk with him. I knew him, I knew Nakasone from quite a number of years back. So I went over to talk with him, and to express the hope of the president that he and Nakasone would work together very closely, and also to invite him, on behalf of the president, to come to Washington as soon after he was put in office as he could.

I think the future prime minister (this was just a few days before he was chosen) was very pleased about that, and did, of course, decide to come. And with that, I think we built up a very good relationship between the president and Prime Minister Nakasone, which lasted through Nakasone's time, five years as prime minister.

I served in the capacity as a kind of personal emissary between the two, because of my background with Nakasone and because of the position I held here in Washington. Even when I moved over to the State Department as assistant secretary, I still maintained this kind of personal emissary type relationship between the president and the prime minister.

And even when Nakasone left office and Mr. Takeshita came in, I continued on with that, because I also, again, had very good personal ties with Takeshita, going back to when I was in Japan around 1960. So we had some kind of a relationship here with the president, and it worked very well.

Q: How well did these two gentlemen, Nakasone and Takeshita, understand the workings of the United States, and the problems of public opinion, and sort of the basic problem, the economic problem? We see the imbalance, and we see Japan as somehow being an unfair competitor. We feel sort of second-rate economically to them, and there's resentment and all this. How well did they understand that and could work with us?

SIGUR: Well, I think they came to understand it. I think it was hard, to begin with, for them to see what was happening in the United States. But Nakasone and Takeshita, and I think Kaifu has continued this, took steps to try to respond to the American dissatisfaction over the trade problems and so forth. And certainly one of the things that they have moved ahead on very satisfactorily from our point of view is the defense area. The Japanese moved quite positively on this under Nakasone, and this has continued.

Q: When you say "moved positively," what was...?

SIGUR: Well, they've increased spending in the defense area. And they work much more cooperatively with us than was the case before Nakasone became prime minister. And their defense plans and so forth are quite adequate from our point of view, I think. Some members of Congress say that they should spend a lot more money, but one has to look at that from many different ways as to just how large the Japanese defense establishment should be. There are many factors involved. Having served in Korea, you know what I'm talking about. So I think from the American point of view, certainly from the defense establishment point of view, the Japanese are doing very well. We'd like to see them spend more money on taking care of our bases in Japan and this sort of thing.

Q: But not as far as beefing up their forces.

SIGUR: Not as far as beefing up their forces any more than they are doing. Actually, they have today, I think, the fifth or sixth largest military establishment in the world. Non-nuclear, but it's very substantial. And even though the Japanese percentage of spending is about one percent of its budget (maybe a little more than that if you count it by NATO standards), the Japanese economy is so huge, that's a lot of money we're talking about. Nothing like what we spend, but nonetheless they do very well. Frankly, it seems to me it's not in the American interest to see a much larger Japanese military establishment.

Q: Well, let's look at Korea during this time. How did we view the situation? Park Chung Hee had been assassinated, and you had Chun Doo Hwan as president there. Very authoritarian government, but some of the worst manifestations were already over. But you had very much a threat from North Korea. How did we view developments in Korea during this time?

SIGUR: Well, we were, of course, very pleased with the way in which Korea was developing economically. One couldn't help but be pleased with that, because they were doing extremely well. The Korean private sector was leading the charge on this, and Chun Doo Hwan and his government, to its credit, sort of gave them their heads on this. And they were very, very competent and able people who were leading the economic developments in Korea. So that the Korean economy was moving during the Chun regime. And the security relationship between Korea and the United States, of course, was fine.

The basic difficulties in Korea, as you pointed out, had to do with the authoritarian nature of the regime and how this fitted, or rather didn't fit, in terms of the American belief that a democratic system is the best system. When you get a society, such as Korea, which is developing so rapidly economically in the way of getting an emerging and burgeoning middle class and all this, the people obviously want to have a much greater say in their future and in their present circumstances.

I had known Chun Doo Hwan since he had taken over power. I had been in Korea a couple of times and had met with him shortly after he assumed the presidency. Also, if you recall, he was the first foreign visitor to visit President Reagan in 1981. This showed U.S. continuing commitment to the independence of Korea.

As I say, we kept pressing our views on human rights and more political opening to the authorities there, including the president. At the same time, we kept our commitment, kept our ground forces on the 38th parallel and President Reagan made it clear he was not going to change that. And our economic ties with Korea became broader and deeper.

More and more, though, as President Chun began to get to the end of his term, which was coming up in 1987, we had to consider how a presidential change was going to take place, if indeed it was. There were all sorts of rumors in Korea that Chun really had no intention of giving up power, and that he would use the military to stay in power.

We decided to get rather bold in our policy. On February 6, 1987, when I was assistant secretary, I went to New York and made a speech there. And this speech rather shook the political establishment in Korea, and the military establishment. Because, in that, I spoke of the need for the civilianization of the government. This was rather clear, what we meant there. I felt very deeply, as we all did, that we would take President Chun at his word that he intended to step down and that he intended to allow the people to choose his successor.

So there was a great deal of interest, obviously, as I said, in Korea over that speech and what this meant, whether the United States was changing policy in the sense of withdrawing from full support of Chun. That was not the point. The point of the speech was to say that we support President Chun's determination to step down.

Q: Did you have a feeling, though, that in a way you were calling a bluff?

SIGUR: Yes, in a way. I think that's true. But President Chun had always said, in the meetings that any of us had had with him, with the president in 1983 when the president was over there, and with Secretary Shultz and myself and others afterwards, that he was irrevocably determined to leave office in 1987. Now, as I say, a lot of people didn't believe it, but he had never waffled on that in terms of what he said to us.

And shortly after I made the speech, I went with Shultz on an Asian trip and we stopped in Seoul. And at the luncheon table, President Chun raised my speech. He made some very flattering remarks about me as a friend of Korea and all this. He knew that, and everybody knew that and so forth. And he said, "While some of the words you used in that speech caused some difficulty to some of our people, I know that you understand the Korean situation well, and I think that the way in which you expressed yourself shows that."

At that point, Secretary Shultz said, "And I hope you understand, Mr. President, that that speech is the basic policy of the American government. This is the policy of the president and of me. And so read it carefully and take every word, because that is our policy."

That was important that he say that. He also said it publicly at a press conference, he was asked if my speech actually reflected the views of the president, and he said, "In every comma, in every dot of the i, in every..., that is the policy."

Now this was very interesting. As I said, it sort of gave them an understanding, not necessarily from Chun's point of view, but from the point of view of other people who might have different points of view, particularly in the military, that this really is what the United States felt. Look, Korea is an independent country, they can do what they choose, but we felt we had to make our position clear.

Q: I think this was very important, because we did have a certain split in our foreign relations apparatus. You had Caspar Weinberger as secretary of defense, and I don't know on this particular thing, but he seemed to be taking a separate tack which was much more, hard line is the wrong term, but much more looking after military interests, but it did not seem to be always in complete step.

SIGUR: I think that's true, in a sense. After all, the defense establishment in this country has got to think fundamentally in defense terms. But my argument, and the argument, I think, of others in the government, was that look, we are just as much interested in defense as you are. But we happen to believe, and we think history bears it out, that a society in which people have as much say as possible, given differences of culture, history, social development, etc. about their own circumstances and how they develop and what their future is that that is the most secure society on the face of the globe. I agree with Winston Churchill, democracy is a lousy system, but it's better than all the others. It is better than all the others, and a Korea which is moves toward allowing its

people to decide their own fate is a more secure Korea. This is a place where the people will feel they want to defend themselves, they want to support the independence and freedom that they exercise. So we believe security and democracy go hand in hand.

When I took that trip over to Korea at the end of June of 1987, that was the message that I brought. Because we saw Korea getting into more and more serious problems.

Q: What was your impression of our embassy in Korea at the time and how it was responding to the situation?

SIGUR: Well, I think it was responding rather well. It was a difficult time. It was a hard time. The situation was very volatile and you had a lot of things taking place.

Q: A lot of student rioting.

SIGUR: A lot of student riots. And the people were obviously beginning to get worked up about it. When I went to Korea (and it was very interesting how we decided that), I met with everybody there at the time, really: the president, of course, his cabinet, and the opposition. I recall a statement by one of the members of the cabinet, a sort of tough-liner in his views, who said, "There is a fever abroad in our land." And he was right. And the fever was: "We demand to have more say! We're not going to live like this any more!" He was right and he knew it. This fever was there and it had to be dealt with.

It wasn't easy for the embassy. I think they did a pretty good job.

Q: You were saying there was a story about this trip when you went over.

SIGUR: Well, it was interesting. Shultz and I were on this trip out to Asia. We'd been down to an ASEAN meeting in Southeast Asia and then we were going on to Australia for an ANZUS meeting. I remember reading the reports coming in from Korea. They began to get more and more somber, with the increase in sizes of demonstrations on the streets, and there was more and more concern that the military would be used.

We were leaving for Sydney the next morning. I remember that evening, late in the evening after dinner, I was reading all these cables, and I couldn't sleep. I kept thinking: Something, we've got to do something.

I woke up early, about five o'clock or so. (I think the plane was leaving at seven-thirty or something like that--you know how these trips are.) Anyway, I went to Secretary Shultz's room, and I said, "Is he up yet? I'd like to talk to him about something."
I did see him, and I said, "I think I ought to go to Korea. I think we've got to do something. We've got to make a show that we support what we've said we support. And we've got to try to make it very clear where the United States stands and also that I will, at the same time, listen. I'm going to listen and find out exactly what's going on."

So he said, "Makes sense to me. Let me call the president, and you can go as his emissary." We would give it high visibility. Of course, we had to get the approval of the government of Korea. But we did all that, and so by the time we got on the plane and were a couple of hours out everything was set so that I could go.
I sat through the first day and a half of the ANZUS meeting, it was basically over except for a dinner and so forth, and then I flew to Korea.

That was a fascinating trip, because it was very high visibility, and I met with everybody, including a couple of hours with the president (that, some day, I'll write up, but not yet), and with all of the others, with Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam, still under house arrest, and with Cardinal Kim, who was the symbol of Christian religious opposition to a continuance of government by the military.

Q: These were the opposition leaders under house arrest most of the time.

SIGUR: Well, Kim Dae Jung was under house arrest. Kim Young Sam was not, at that time, he'd been let out.

And I also met with people outside: the newspaper people, Cardinal Kim and some of the other religious leaders and so forth, and tried to get a feel. I must say, everybody was deeply concerned about what was happening, and they were delighted, all of them, I think, with my visit.

President Reagan gave me full support. He was asked by one of the newsmen, I don't think he had a press conference, but he was asked what about this trip by Sigur over there, and he said, "Well, he's got my full confidence and he's doing what has to be done. I'm not going to say any more than that." And that was great.

Q: But putting this into context at the time, because we want to go back to it, the Philippines had just gone through a very traumatic thing. And everybody was looking at the Philippines and saying that at a certain point, the United States said enough is enough under Marcos and was very instrumental in ending that dictatorship. This must have been very much on the minds of everybody, wasn't it?

SIGUR: It was very on the minds of everybody, and it was on the minds of all the Koreans.

Q: I was going to say, the Koreans watched this very...

SIGUR: There was no question about that, everybody thought about that. And everybody knew, obviously, that I had played a role in the Philippine situation.

I remember thinking about that, after Korea, when I went back to the Philippines. When I was in a meeting with President Aquino, and I stepped out, General Ramos was there in the foyer waiting to see her. So I went up and shook his hand, and he said, "Aha, so Mr.

Democracy has come to the Philippines again. Now what's your advice this time?" So you sort of had a cloak put over you when you were done.

In any event, the Philippines was very much on everybody's mind, but it was a different situation, of course. It was quite different, quite different. After all, there were so many things that were different, not least of all was the tremendous economic prosperity in Korea, which was evident all over the place.

Q: Which nobody wanted to upset.

SIGUR: Nobody wanted to upset that. That was one of the big things, of course. It was very interesting, nobody wanted to upset that. They were worried about that and concerned about that, not to upset that. And, of course, one of the other big things was the Olympics.

Q: Yes, the 1988 Olympics was Korea's chance to shine.

SIGUR: Yes, it was coming on, and nobody wanted to upset that. So you had some good things going for you, if you could just get over that very difficult time. And I think it was very important that the United States make its position clear.

As I left Seoul, I had an interview at the airport with the press. And I remember this one American correspondent (ABC I think he was) said to me, "Is there any doubt in the minds of the Korean authorities, including President Chun and the military leadership, of what the United States would like to see here?"

And I said, "Let me make one thing crystal clear, as I made it to them, the United States absolutely opposes the use of military force in these circumstances. We see no reason for it. We could never condone it. We would always oppose it."

And after that, the opposition people told me that that statement had more impact on many Koreans than any single thing. So many people remembered Kwangju in 1980 and what they regarded as American ambiguity about the use of military force there by Chun. I wanted to be absolutely certain that no one could charge the U.S. with ambiguity on this occasion.

Q: Again, to put this into context, there had been a very brutal repression in...

SIGUR: In Kwangju in 1980.

Q: In Kwangju in 1980 by Chun Doo Hwan.

SIGUR: And they thought it would happen again.

Q: Nobody had forgotten that, and so this was...

SIGUR: It was very much alive, very much alive.

Q: There was always the rumor that there was complicity of the United States, at least to say go ahead. And this was clearly obviously in your mind. So we had to make this absolutely ironclad.

SIGUR: Absolutely ironclad that there was not a shadow of a doubt that we would oppose it. It had to be said, and it had to be said publicly as well as privately. I think some people back here may not have been too happy with that statement of mine. But nonetheless I felt, given the circumstances in Korea and given the way I thought Roh Tae Woo was going to move, you see... Because I came back to this country, and two days later Roh Tae Woo issued his tremendous change in policy. He turned around and accepted everything that the pro-democracy people wanted. But, see, I suspected that something dramatic was coming. So the American position had to be made crystal clear.

Q: Because you also had your Korean military, which had to understand where they stood.

SIGUR: Absolutely. Absolutely. We never knew, you see. Certainly there were elements in the Korean military who were very disturbed over what was going on in Korea, and who wanted to step in and crush it. There was no question about this. We knew that and we understood that. And we had to make it absolutely plain. That's why, as I say, when Shultz and I talked about it, it was decided that I would go as the president's personal emissary to Seoul. That's why I had to speak in that capacity, clearly representing the president.

Q: Well, now, you had the president's full support at this time.

SIGUR: Yes.

Q: Do you think (maybe this is presumptuous) that the president had learned a lesson, and everybody in the government, including the hard-liners, had learned a lesson from the Philippines? That these things happen, and let's get ahead of a popular movement that seems to be happening there, rather than trying to keep the status quo.

SIGUR: I think so. I think that there was that. But, as I say, I do believe, more fundamentally, it was the acceptance that security and democracy go hand in hand. That you can better fulfill your security obligations if you give the people a part of the political decision-making process.

Q: But see, this is a lesson that we have not acceded to for a long time in our policy. For many years we tended to side with basically military rule, because we were concerned about Communism and what have you. Things were changing in the world; it wasn't just us. Although this makes sense now, it did not always make sense.

SIGUR: No, it didn't. You're quite right. And certainly that attitude was around. It was around. But anyway, we sort of took the bull by the horns and we acted--at least in words. I think it was very necessary to do. And I think if you look at what's happened in Korea, we can be very pleased by the way things have moved. I think the position of the United States is, as a result, considerably enhanced.

Q: Because this is an oral history, and we're talking about it at the time, and things may change, could you explain how we felt about North Korea at that time?

SIGUR: We were very disturbed about that country. We were particularly concerned about what they might do to upset things in South Korea during the changeover of power from Chun to a civilian. This was something that was of great concern to us. We were also very much concerned about the Olympics and the possibility of the North trying to upset the games.

So during this time of crisis in South Korea, we made it as clear as we could to the North that any efforts on their part to try to take advantage of disturbances in the South would lead to American reaction. And we made this clear to the Soviet Union and to China, and urged them to make this clear to their North Korean clients, so that they wouldn't misunderstand here, that the United States would not sit by.

So we were concerned, we were worried, and we watched the situation very carefully, as you can imagine, in terms of troop movements and things of that sort, everything we could find out. But I don't think the North had any doubts, because we were determined. And I think they realized that President Reagan was not somebody they could fool around with on something like that, and that he would react. So I think we did what we could to keep the North at bay during this period and during this time. And, as I say, it worked.

I'm not saying that the United States was the mover and shaker in all this; it was the Koreans themselves. They're the ones who did it. They're the ones who took the steps. They're the ones who accomplished all of this.

Q: You can say we acted in the role that we would like to act.

SIGUR: That's exactly the way I believe.

Q: As somewhat the honest broker outside, saying: We'll give you support and we'll give you our military might, but at the same time, straighten up your own house. We're not going to keep a small group in power.

SIGUR: Absolutely. I think that's exactly what we should have done, and that's what we did.

Q: Today is July 3, 1990. This is the second interview with Assistant Secretary Gaston Sigur. Gaston, last time, we talked a lot about the Korean situation as you saw it. We're sort of jumping around a bit, but I would like to move right to the time that you were the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. This was from '86 to '89. How did you get the job?

SIGUR: Paul Wolfowitz, who had been in the job, was going to Indonesia as ambassador. And, I think, just in conversations that Shultz and others had, they decided that they wanted to ask me to take it.

Q: You had known Shultz before?

SIGUR: Oh, yes, sure. I worked rather closely with him when I was at the NSC.

Q: What was your impression of the staff of EAP when you got there?

SIGUR: Well, again, during my time at the NSC I worked rather closely with a lot of the staff there, and I was quite impressed with them. I thought they were very good, competent, able, and dedicated people.

Q: Who were some of the people who worked immediately under you as assistant secretary?

SIGUR: I had several deputy assistants when I first arrived. John Monjo was the chief one at the time. Then I had Jim Lilley, who was China, South Pacific. And Bill Pease, who was in the economic area and Bill Sherman for Japan and Korea. Later Bill Clerk took over as senior deputy and covered Japan and Korea. Stape Roy for China and Dave Lambertson for Southeast Asia.

Q: What was your impression, as you looked around at the other bureaus? I'm particularly thinking of the ARA, Latin American Affairs. From the outside, it seemed like this was a place in terrible turmoil. It was caught in a policy situation from the Reagan administration, which wanted one thing, and things weren't going too well. Did you have a feeling that you were, if not in a sea of calm, at least something where you weren't caught in major policy problems?

SIGUR: We certainly were not caught in major policy differences within the government ranks. But that had been true, certainly since I came into the government in July of 1982 at the NSC. We worked very closely together, those of us who were responsible for policy in East Asia and the Pacific. Before I moved over to EAP, I would say I worked very closely with Wolfowitz, and with Rich Armitage over at Defense, and with others in the economic and trade area, the intelligence areas and so forth. We had a very close working relationship, and it was not an antagonistic one. It was not a confrontational one. We had respect for one another, for the views of one another. And as a consequence, I think we were able to get a great many things done.

In certain other regions of the world, the way in which they were dealt with, I can't really speak to that. Even in Asia you had differences of opinion and views about how you should proceed, but, as I said, we had a great respect for one another, and we worked it out so that we could move ahead in a cooperative, collegial fashion. And I think that's the way we ran it.

Q: Well, now, the Reagan administration obviously came from the right side of the spectrum of the Republican Party, which had traditionally been a tremendous supporter of Chiang Kai-shek and Formosa and all. Carter, the previous administration, had sort of regularized relations. By the time you got there, almost ten years later, had the policy problem of how to deal with Taiwan and the People's Republic of China been laid more or less to rest? I'm talking about in the American domestic political field.

SIGUR: It's very difficult, Stu, for me to separate my time at the NSC from my time in EAP. I can't draw a line and say here it was and here it wasn't; that's not the way it was.

Q: Ok, we've talked a lot about Korea, but not about China. Let's talk about this.

SIGUR: I think that's a very important point, our China policy. This was something that I feel was rather carefully handled during the time that I was in there, from July of '82 until February of '89.

Certainly one of the first acts that I had to do was to contribute to the finalization of the August, 1982 communiqué with China on sale of arms to Taiwan. I was deeply involved in that, almost fully involved in that from the moment that I stepped into the office at the National Security Council on July 5, 1982 until August 17, when the communiqué was issued. And I was much involved with the president, and the national security advisor, Judge Clark, and the secretary of state, George Shultz, on this.

A major problem, if you want to call it that, or a major difference of view, perhaps, between ourselves and China was effectively laid to rest, even though some people didn't recognize that at the time. But as a matter of fact, it was.

And we were able to maintain the elements in the Taiwan Relations Act, which sort of regularized our unofficial relations with Taiwan and in fact created a relationship with Taiwan which I think was probably as good a relationship as we'd ever had with them over the years. Unofficial as it is, it nonetheless works.

And with China we were able to establish a very sound, businesslike relationship. The Chinese recognized, I think, after the communiqué, and with some of the things that we did, that the president indeed was determined to have a good relationship with China. There was no question about Reagan's commitment to this, while at the same time, he was determined to live up to the Taiwan Relations Act which, after all, was the law passed by our Congress overwhelmingly and signed by President Carter.

So we did this, and as a consequence, with the relationship that we were able to maintain with Taiwan and their assurance that the United States would stand by them, they were able to proceed along the lines that we have been witnessing over the past several years, of opening the society, of establishing a kind of political pluralism and democracy, if you will, which I think is very important to us and, of course, to them.

And at the same time, we were able to build up our relationship with China, to maintain a strategic relationship with them, and to broaden our economic ties and so forth--until Tiananmen, which, of course, has had an impact, particularly on the economic side of things, for now. With the decision by President Bush on MFN, and with the Chinese allowing Fong Ju to leave the American Embassy compound, hopefully the relationship between our two countries will begin to move ahead again.

Q: Were there any sort of areas of opposition within the White House?

SIGUR: Sure.

Q: Because this was the administration that came in to right the wrongs of a more leftist government, the Carter one, and China has always been on the forefront of Republican domestic politics.

SIGUR: Well, perhaps, but I think you've got to be careful about making it quite as black and white. After all, it wasn't Carter that started the opening to China, it was Nixon.

To me, it was very interesting. When we signed the communiqué, in August of '82, the opposition to the signing of it, from the side that felt we were in fact capitulating to the demands of Beijing and that we were not adequately providing for the security and future safety of our friends on Taiwan, it came from the Congress, and it was all over the place. It wasn't just...

Q: You didn't feel this was sort the right, right wing of the...

SIGUR: No, sir. I don't want to go into names here, but it was people who you would not think of that way at all, who would give me phone calls and say, "What have you done? How dare you do something like this?" I'm talking about one of the leading Democratic senators, who gave me a call and just laced me up and down, "How could you have done it?" This was no right-winger we're talking about.

Yes, I got it from all sides. However, the fact that Reagan had done it, in some ways muted some of the critics up there from the more right wing of the Republican Party who would have, if it had been another president, really been much more loud than they were. They didn't like it, but they didn't want to come out against him.

And I might say this, Stu, during the course of the time of finalizing this communiqué, I and others really made a tremendous effort to explain what we were doing on the Hill. We went up privately, met with senators and their staffs to tell them what we were doing and where we were going. Now we were not seeking their approval, that was not the point. The point was we knew where we wanted to go, and the president knew where he wanted to go. But we did keep them informed.

Now that doesn't mean they were happy. They would say, "Oh, well, this is just terrible what you're doing." But we would explain and say, "Now this is where we're going and this is what we intend to do." And we would try to tell them that in no way were we abandoning our friends on Taiwan. Quite the opposite. What we were trying to do was to create a more stable atmosphere in which we could continue to maintain good and close relations, unofficial, with Taiwan, and at the same time, build up the ties with Beijing, which was essential in our terms. And the president was perfectly behind this dual track policy.

Q: You did feel the hand of the president as you went. Because sometimes there's talk about Reagan being known as a hands-off president.

SIGUR: Oh, absolutely not. Absolutely not. And I know this, Stu, I worked with him on this. He went over it line by line and comma by comma in terms of what was being done. You're correct, and this is one of the things which was very dear to his heart, this whole question of China and Taiwan. And he wanted to be sure that what he was doing conformed to the dual policy, if you want to call it that, which he was determined to try to put into effect. That is, continue our support and backing of the people of Taiwan and at the same time, build up our relationship with China. There was never, that I ever heard from him, a word in which he questioned the latter. There was no doubt of the importance of the relationship with China. That had to be pursued and he intended to do it.

He saw this communiqué as one of the important steps, but there were others as well, of course. And there were people who were not so sure about this. There were people who thought perhaps the wording of the thing was wrong. One could question some of the wording. I myself questioned some of the wording and say, "Well, I wish we hadn't at one point agreed to this, and we could have changed it a little bit here and there." But that's always the case.

But the fact of the matter is, it was important that the president assumed the responsibility for this. There were efforts on the part of certain members of Congress to say, even to him, that "we wonder if you fully understand the import of what you have done, that perhaps elements in the State Department or the National Security Council have talked you into something that you don't..." And at that, the president would get furious. He would say, "What are you talking about? This is mine. This is my document. This is what I want to do." So he took the full responsibility for it, which was essential.

And it just seems to me, as we moved along in our policy toward China and toward Taiwan, within certain elements of our government there were always differences of view. Toward China in the economic area, the sale of high- level technology and this sort of thing. As you know, there was opposition to some of that from the Department of Defense--or from some elements in the Department of Defense. (I have to be careful about labeling one department, because it wasn't quite that simple.)

But during the course of this time, the NSC and the State Department always pushed toward greater opening and trying to do what we could with the Chinese. I think we had some very important visits to China during this period of time: the Shultz visit in February of '83; the Baldridge visit in the spring of '83; the Weinberger visit in the fall of '83.

Q: Weinberger was the secretary of defense, and Baldridge was secretary of commerce.

SIGUR: And these all pushed the relationship. And then, of course, Chinese visits to this country: Zhao Ziyang, President Li, others who came. And then, of course, the major visit was the visit of President Reagan in the spring of '84. These all pushed the relationship very far ahead. But at the same time, we were continuing to live up to the obligations that we believed we had to fulfill, under the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act, with Taiwan in terms of the sale of weapons and high-technology.

Q: Listening to you here, I get the impression that having a strong, conservative Republican president in, nailing firm this relationship with Taiwan, stopped things from being on hold, and the citizens of Taiwan then could get about creating a country in their own thing. Because now, for the first time, there wasn't this sort of: Well, what's going to happen? Maybe things will go back to where they were. In a way, the other shoe dropped, and so they were able to get about business. Did you have this feeling in looking at this later on?

SIGUR: I had that feeling. Yes, I had the feeling, after the Carter administration, and the diplomatic recognition of China, and then the break in diplomatic relations with Taiwan, that there was real concern on Taiwan about what was going to happen in the future as far as their relationship with the United States was concerned.
And then, with Reagan coming in, and the communiqué with China, and the way in which that was implemented and put into effect, they saw that Reagan was setting a policy which would sustain the American commitment to Taiwan. They saw that this could happen.

They had been afraid that this couldn't happen, given the formalities that had taken place under Carter and what they considered to be a lack of commitment of that administration to their livelihood and to their future.

But they saw that, under Reagan, this was not the case. That you had a president and an administration that was determined to get the Chinese to accept our policy. You see, they

were afraid that pressure from the Chinese would force the administration (some future administration) to be afraid. But this was not the case.

There was some pressure from the Chinese, but the basic reaction of us in the Reagan administration was: Look, we're living up to our communiqués with you. We want a good relationship with you. We've made that very clear. Now just leave the Taiwan relationship alone. Leave it alone. It's not hurting you, it's not hurting anybody. Now just leave it alone.

And this is one thing the Chinese like to hear. It was very interesting how they understood it. When you would call it a matter of history, they would understand this. And you'd say, "This is a matter of history. These are people who have been friends of ours. These are people who have worked with us over the years. We are not going to just throw them off."

The Chinese would say, "We understand that. We understand that."

And this is the way we put it, Stu, that we were not going to abandon them, and that, in fact, it was to the benefit of China that we did not do so.

Q: Well, they could get about their own business, too.

SIGUR: They could get about their own business, and they understood this. They had certain things that they had to say, of course. I'm sure publicly they would deny this, but you'd get from the Chinese the attitude that look, do what you will, just don't make a big noise about it. Just do what you will and leave it alone.

Q: In a way, I rather imagine there must have been relief on the Chinese versus the Taiwan side, because, again, here came this administration which must have been very problematical when it first came in. I mean, who is this guy Reagan? His position was well-known before. He was, after all, a conservative governor of California.

SIGUR: And he had made some statements during his campaign.

Q: So that everybody must have been quite happy,
really.

SIGUR: Oh, I think so. I certainly had the feeling, during the course of my time in the administration (after the first few months which were a little bumpy, with Beijing), that, as you say, they were trying to find out really what these people stand for.

Then they began to see that this was a pretty good arrangement. Over the course of these years, we in fact were able to build up a relationship with both Beijing and Taipei, which was remarkable in the sense of the friendship (if you can use that word in international affairs), or at least a trust of some kind, that they knew where we came from. And the Chinese knew that Reagan and his administration did want a good relationship with them,

and that this administration was ready to take some hard decisions to push that ahead, such as technological openings and so forth. And they liked it. And the military relationship, which they also liked. And with Taipei, at the same time, we were going to continue to sell weapons, and we were going to allow high-technology to move from this country to Taipei. And so everybody seemed to feel pretty good about this.

It was interesting to me, because the reaction that we would get from other countries was fascinating. I would visit Paris or London or some of these countries, and they would say, "We just don't quite understand it. Here you are, you've got an extraordinary relationship with the Chinese and with Taipei, both at the same time. We haven't been able to do that; we don't know how you've done it." Well, of course, again, we'd say to the Chinese: rooted in history. But it was different from theirs. And they were somewhat astounded at this, that we would even do this. And they would say, "When we talk with the Chinese and when we talk with people in Taiwan, they really trust you. They really think you're doing this very, very well. They have great confidence in the president, and they think that you're committed to these policies, and they're quite happy." This was very interesting.

Of course, as you can imagine, back here you always had some backing and filling in terms of how you did certain things and whether you were being too pro-Taiwan or whether you were being too pro-mainland. But it seems to me, when you figure some of the things that had gone before, that, really, we were able to take China and Chinese policy off the front burner.

Q: Looking back, it was really a progressive period, until June of '89 when all hell broke loose. Up to that point, everything was, really, on both sides. In this period, particularly when you were in EAP, were there any particular knotty problems that you had, say, with China?

SIGUR: Oh, we had a few things, sure. We particularly had the problem of human rights. That was something that was always in front of us, particularly as it involved Tibet. That's the one that hit most strongly during that time. And we had to continually raise it with them, and keep close touch with the Congress. As you know, some people in the Congress didn't think we were strong enough with the Chinese. But I thought we were. I thought we handled that fairly well.

Q: Was this sort of: Okay, we'll go in and talk to appease, or did you feel that you were making any progress on the human rights idea?

SIGUR: I thought we made some. Yes, I think we did make some on the human rights thing, particularly Tibet. We were able, I think, to have them focus on it and understand what the reaction was in this country. We did get some communication going between their officials dealing with Tibet and members of our Congress and their staffs, who had discussions back and forth on it. I thought it was a useful role that we played. We

obviously weren't going to get the Chinese to pull out of Tibet or do anything like that. That was not our intent anyway.

But on the other hand, we pushed pretty hard, and actually I think we got a good working relationship with Congress on this. I personally worked rather closely with Tom Lantos, who was one of the key figures on this. He and I met and talked, and we understood each other, and we worked it out, I thought, quite well. We had respect for one another, and we worked it out rather well. That's important to do. You know, that's so critical, Stu, to really bring people into what you're doing and your thinking and so forth. It's so important.

Q: Right from beginning, the major criticism of Woodrow Wilson was that he did not bring... This is something that's emblazoned on the front of everybody in politics. When you go to the League of Nations, you bring Henry Cabot Lodge with you, rather than just bypass these people.

SIGUR: I must say, we did that deliberately in EAP. And I certainly did it. As soon as I came in over there at the State Department, I started something which had never been done, as far as I know, or hasn't been done since. I would have leading senators and congressmen come over to the State Department for breakfast with me and the deputy assistant secretaries. The congressmen or senators (Senator Lugar, Senator Cranston, etc.) would come at eight o'clock and meet with us upstairs. We'd have a little breakfast and sit and chat for about 45 minutes. Then we'd go to a staff meeting in EAP, where I'd bring in the country directors, and we'd sit around and everybody would talk about what was happening in their area.

This was something that the Congress loved. It was just terrific. They said, "We've never had this before. You know, we're called by the secretary of state about something, one particular problem and so forth, but this, you give us the broad view into the workings." They'd never really had that before.

Q: Were you getting any reflection from other bureaus, saying: Hey, what are you doing, fella? Are you letting the fox into the hen coop?

SIGUR: We had a few, but I didn't take it seriously. Because, to me, this was extremely helpful. Then, as a consequence, before resolutions would be written up on the Hill or presented to the Senate or to the House, we would always be checked with, and asked about it, and what did we think about this and so forth, and how did this fit in. We had a good working relationship with the Congress, a very good working relationship.

Q: Who were some of the key players in Congress that you felt you had to, not had to, but...

SIGUR: There was no question about it, it was, of course, the groups that dealt with Asia. And, of course, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate. And in particular Senator

Cranston, who was the chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, so he was very critical to us. I had a good relationship with Senator Cranston, and do to this day. He and I got along very well. And others there. Senator Pell was always helpful, when he could be. Senator Helms was helpful.

And then on the House side, one of the key figures, as you know, was Steve Solarz. Steve was very helpful, and I was always in pretty close contact with him. And with the Republicans on the Asia, Pacific subcommittee as well. We worked very well together with the staff. And with the Republicans as well, the Republican staff, as well as some of the Democrats. Though some of the other Democrats were critical. Obviously, in our system you have criticism. You're supposed to have it, and it's good, you know, they want to be critical, they want to make some...

Q: You can't run a show without having...

SIGUR: You're not going to get everybody saying this is wonderful. You don't expect that, and that's all right. But I felt that if you open yourself up, and if you talk, and if you try to bring people into what's going on, on the Hill and so forth, they will be basically responsive, and they will be basically responsible. They will not take off on rather terrible, irresponsible actions, activities, speeches or so forth. That doesn't mean you don't have differences of view. And you can have differences of view.

The whole EAP operation, in this city during the Reagan administration, was something that I personally take great pride in. But I also just feel that's the way government is supposed to work. You're supposed to consult with your colleagues. You're supposed to try to bring your policy into some sort of a whole that people can support and back. That's what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to work with the Hill. And I think, in the East Asia and Pacific area, we showed it can be done. It can be done.

Q: I want to get, in a minute, to the Philippines, but in looking at the ARA situation, one has the feeling that all of a sudden personalities get into this.

SIGUR: Oh, sure, all over the place.

Q: These relationships were more than... When you get somebody... Things run according to personality often.

SIGUR: I think that's absolutely right, Stu. I don't think you can emphasize that too much, that personality has a tremendous amount to do with it. And personal interrelationships have a tremendous amount to do with it. We hear so much about these turf battles. So much of that is nothing but individuals trying to make themselves bigger or whatever, and you know, it just is too bad. It's a damn shame, when you get into policies of real substance and so forth.

Q: Speaking about personalities, before we move on could you tell me your impression of how George Shultz handled the department and how much he was involved in the process. Because now we have a secretary of state, James Baker, who is somewhat detached, who seems almost to be more a creature of the White House than of the State Department. This may be a gross exaggeration, but this is the impression I get. How did Shultz, particularly in the time you were in as assistant secretary, handle the State Department, from your observation?

SIGUR: Well, I personally think he handled it very well. I have tremendous respect for George Shultz, not only as a secretary of state in terms of the substance of the matters. I think he did have a vision of foreign policy, and he had his own view as to how foreign policy should be carried out, and the basic elements of that policy that he wanted to achieve.

And I think he understood his role in relationship with the president. He always had a great respect for the president and the way in which the president saw the world, which was his way as well. Now, of course, obviously those people worked on each other, you know what I mean, as to how these things came about. I can't speak too specifically about it.

But as far as the actual running of the department, I think he did it very well. He made use of people, and I think that's absolutely critical. And one thing that Shultz felt very strongly about, he was very, very sure that the professionals in the State Department were really top-flight people and were people who could, for the most part, be totally relied upon. Now some political appointees don't have that belief.

Q: Oh, I know that.

SIGUR: But George Shultz did. I think that's very important. And I think it's very important to have an organization work properly.

Q: Because it's immediately felt up and down.

SIGUR: It's felt, if you don't have that confidence. And he did. And I certainly felt, during my time in government, that he was absolutely right on that. That is correct. It's true. That is one of the strengths of our system, that you've got these professionals who stay in place, and who will serve whoever comes in, and who will give their honest views and opinions, and who will do everything they can to carry out policy determined by the president and his advisors.

I never had any question of that, and Shultz certainly never had any question of that. I think that was one of his strongest points, that he handled the department that way. It comes through in many ways, in so many different ways. And he made use of people. I had a very good, close working relationship with Shultz.

Q: You were in consultation with him quite often.

SIGUR: Sure, all the time. All the time.

Q: He kept himself well-informed, you might say, from the professional ranks up through you to Shultz. There were good, solid lines of communication.

SIGUR: He and I came into the government about the same time, in the summer of 1982, and so I had good relations with him all the time during that period. Not the close relationship that I had when I was assistant secretary, but nonetheless, in many meetings and all this kind of thing.

Q: You weren't the new boy on the block.

SIGUR: And went on his trips and this sort of thing, to Asia and so forth.

Q: I wonder if we could move now to probably what I guess was the main crisis thing during your time, the Philippines. What was the situation in the Philippines when you came into the assistant secretaryship?

SIGUR: Well, the change had taken place and Aquino was in power.

Q: Well, then, maybe we better to go back to the NSC time. How did you all see it from the NSC perspective? Because one does have the feeling that this was a situation which worked out well, but you had an extremely reluctant president on this situation. Did you feel this? We're talking about the Marcos rule, which was eventually overthrown, but you were there during the transition from almost supreme rule to gradual deterioration to the overthrow.

SIGUR: No one in the administration wanted to see a situation develop in the Philippines which would lead to a civil war. The hope was to avoid bloodshed. We began to articulate more strongly, I think, that if you are really going to have a strong security system in a country, you have to in fact have a democratic society, that you won't have a security system which really works and will have the support of the people, which is essential if it's going to mean anything.

We began to move in this direction. I think that in order to enhance the American security relationship with the Philippines, it was necessary to restore a democratic form of government to their country. Or to help to them restore it (the United States wasn't going to come and put it in), to assist those elements that wanted to pull in that direction.

Now the initial way of doing this was to see if it was possible to get Marcos and his people to do it. And this is the way we began to talk to him, that he had to move in this direction. Otherwise, he was courting disaster--of not only the Communist insurgency, but among other elements of his society--and that this just was hopeless from his point of

view if he didn't do something about it. We used many means to do this publicly as well as in private. We had public statements made by people, but mostly through private conversations with him.

Well, in the last couple of years of his administration, he was clearly beginning to lose touch with the reality of what was actually taking place in his country. You can go into all this chapter and verse (and some people have done it), but it was very difficult to deal with him and try to get him to see what was going on.

And, of course, with the assassination of Aquino, the situation became even more immediate in terms of dangers taking place in the Philippines which could lead to civil strife of a very bloody nature. As I say, the idea was to do everything possible to avoid civil war and to try to get Marcos to change. After the assassination of Aquino, it became less likely, I suppose, that he might do something.

And we have to remember always through here that he was ill, and you were never quite sure how much he really was in control and understood what was going on.

So it was very difficult to deal with the situation at this time. And, of course, we were continuing to get reports of the dissatisfaction with him (even among people fairly close to him) and of the inability of anybody except for a handful of his closest cronies to see him and to talk with him.

So we got more and more concerned about this, and did have then-Senator Laxalt go over there and talk with him, to express the grave concern of the president. We chose Laxalt because of his closeness to Reagan, so that Marcos could not feel that this was not coming from the president, as he tended to think when it came through normal government channels.

Q: From the ambassador or your staff, whoever it was.

SIGUR: That's right, that this was not the real thing. And so we did have Laxalt visit. And it was as a result of that visit that Marcos called the election. And, of course, it was the election that finally brought him down.

When one gets the feeling that the president was perhaps dragging his feet on some of this, I think we do have to keep in mind that one of the major concerns of the president was that the United States would not in any way be a contributor to bloodshed. Because what could we do if something did start? We couldn't control anything. And we all felt that, of course. If something began to go...

Q: Actually, it was a very dicey situation.

SIGUR: A very dicey situation. A very difficult situation. So we had a real tricky time there with it.

And I remember, after the elections and the shenanigans that went on with that and then the trouble (I was still at the National Security Council, I was about to move over to State, but I was still over there at the time), that was the morning we got the word that something was going on, from Johnny Enrile, who was then secretary of defense and who was about to be arrested by Marcos. In any event, he led the rebellion against him, with General Ramos.

But I remember I was leaving that morning for Tokyo. I was going on the advance trip for the economic summit to be held in Tokyo in May. And I got a call, I guess from the Situation Room in the White House, at about three o'clock in the morning, saying that there were reports coming in from Manila that rebellion was about to begin. The situation was very fluid.

So I immediately went in. I had my bags packed to take off on the flight leaving at nine o'clock (it had already gone). I went in and kept up on things. And, of course, State had set up one of these emergency situation crisis centers, so we were in touch. I had thought initially that I would back out of the trip to Tokyo. (I tell you this story because I think it's a little interesting.)

Q: Yes, I think it is.

SIGUR: But in talking to Shultz and Poindexter, who was the national security advisor at the time, they felt, and I agreed, that I should go on to Tokyo, for two reasons. One, to personally brief Prime Minister Nakasone on what position the United States was going to be taking on all this, and to keep him informed all the time, because I would be kept up to date from Washington on this. And also to be in place in the event that they wanted me to take a trip to Manila, to talk with Marcos and to, in effect,...

Q: Wish him well and put him on the plane.

SIGUR: So I went on, and as we flew over the Pacific I kept in touch with what was going on. (This was a special plane, you see, because it was the advance trip; you know how those things go.)

When we got to Tokyo we were met by the embassy people, and they had a message to me from Washington to call Poindexter right away when I got there. So I did, and his word was that a plane was available for me at Yokota Air Base to immediately fly down to Manila.

I thought, well, what the hell, we were leaving within the hour, but I would brief the prime minister first before I went. So I was briefing the prime minister, and while I was doing that, I had another call from Washington, saying that events were passing me by. I wouldn't have time to get to Manila. It would take four hours to fly down there, and there

just simply wasn't time. So that's when they decided to have Laxalt call Marcos, if you remember.

Q: Laxalt called from the United States.

SIGUR: And said what I would have said to him: The game's up. As far as we're concerned, the game's up. That was the point. But Laxalt did it by telephone because there was no time. By the time I got there, it would have been passé.

So anyway, I stayed in Tokyo. But it was very useful, and I think there was no question as to what Nakasone thought about it, and the president, and Shultz, because I was able to keep Nakasone personally informed all the time of what we were doing.

Q: The Japanese were taking a very close look at this.

SIGUR: Taking a very close look, and some of the Japanese politicians weren't so sure about this and felt that we were doing in Marcos, and they didn't like it particularly.

So the prime minister was able to use the things that I was saying to him, on the floor of the Diet when he had to answer the questions about it. He gave the United States full and solid support and said how strongly he backed the policy of the United States, that Japan was solid. That was very good from our point of view, so it was probably the right thing to have done, to have gone over there. It worked out very well, and he was very pleased with it and how much it had helped.

We coordinated with Japan. The Japanese were right on board with our policy. Otherwise, we could have had some differences there, because the Japanese political leadership were not so sure of what we were doing. I was able to not only keep the Prime Minister completely informed about our policy, but also get his views and report them immediately back to the president.

Q: What was your impression of the Aquino government, as an assistant secretary?

SIGUR: I went over to the Philippines at the end of March, '86. She had only been in office about three weeks when I went over. That was the first time I had ever met her, and I must say, she impressed me at that time. She was a person obviously who was new to the game and didn't have a grasp of what the presidency really meant and all that.

She was about to take some very important political steps: to dissolve the legislature, throw them all out, and to, in effect, assume dictatorial powers until plans for elections could be put into effect and she could move toward democracy. None of us had any doubts that she was going to establish a democratic system, we never doubted that for a minute, but she was going to assume dictatorial powers temporarily.

The day before I saw her, I met with Vice President Laurel and Secretary of Defense Enrile, who were very unhappy with what she was doing, and felt that this was a very wrong way to go, and made that very strong and clear to me.

So I saw her in the afternoon of this next day. (I forget the dates, but it doesn't matter.) Shortly after I saw her, she was going on national television to tell the people what she was going to do, that she was going to throw the legislature out.

Q: The legislature at that time being packed with Marcos people.

SIGUR: A goodly group were pro-Marcos people. But as Enrile and Laurel and others pointed out, quite a number of those people were pretty good, able people. Also, you see, she was removing all of the governors. And there again they had real problems with that. They said, "Look, some of these governors have been very good. They were not toadies of Marcos, that's not the way it was. And she shouldn't just cashier them all." But that's what she did, you see.

In any event, I had a conversation with her just before she went on television. It was very interesting, because she told me what she was going to do. She knew that I had had conversations with people who were strongly opposed to this, so she asked me my opinion.

And I said, "Look, the United States government fully, completely supports you. We've made that very clear. You are the president of the Philippines. We believe that you are going to take the steps that you have to take to move the country forward towards democracy, and economically to strengthen the military and so forth. We firmly believe that you are determined to do these things. And therefore what you feel is essential to do, we will support."

So she had that, anyhow, before she went before the cameras.

As we walked out, her whole cabinet was there. They had come about a half an hour early to be ready for the speeches. She was very anxious that I see the living quarters of the Marcoses at that time, so she asked Enrile and General Ramos if they would show me around the place. We saw the shoes and all, which was quite interesting as we went through that. Then they got back in time to be with her when she made the speech, and I left, of course.

But I was rather impressed with her at the time. You had, even then, all this ferment about the people around her, and what that would mean down the road. But she stuck by her guns there, to do what she felt was necessary to really change the situation in the Philippines. Maybe it wasn't all correct, but nonetheless she took tough decisions and she did it.

I've seen her many times since then, of course, over here and there, and I've always felt that she's got a bit of iron in her. She may not be the best administrator in the world, I think one can say that, but the situation in the Philippines is a very difficult one, we all know that. It's a hard country to govern, it's a hard country to get moving in proper directions.

And I think maybe the comment of Cardinal Sin, that we got rid of Ali Baba but we still have the Forty Thieves-- you know, there may be a lot to that.

But I don't think anyone has ever questioned her personal honesty (I've never heard it if they have) and what she's trying to do. She's had able people in her government. I don't know, it's a hard place to govern. And she has survived coup efforts; she's still there. A lot of people figured she wouldn't be.

But we were determined here, and this is one thing that Reagan did and Bush continued. We were determined that as far as this government was concerned we would not, in any way falter, in our support of her and her government, that that was absolutely essential. If it once began to be felt anywhere that the United States was not solid here, you could have much worse trouble than you had.

Q: We weren't trying to fine-tune her rule. In other words, your outlook was: We're going to support her, we think she's the right person. There are going to be details, but let's not get into this.

SIGUR: She's got to call those shots. We can't do it. We simply don't know them. Every time the United States tries to do some of that stuff, we fall on our face. We all know that. That's just not the way to do it.

Q: But it's very difficult not to, particularly when you have this patronage-client type relationship.

SIGUR: I know, but you can't do it. In my view, you simply can't do it. And I certainly resisted every effort to try to do that.

Q: And I'm sure there must have been sniping from every angle on you, to try to get in and fine-tune this.

SIGUR: Oh, yes. All the time. All the time. And one had to resist it, that's all. And I think so far we've been proven to have been fairly all right on this.

Q: How about our bases there? It just seems like this is sort of THE great base issue. But everywhere we are... I mean, it took us years to get out of Ethiopia, and everything was driven by one small communications base. But, of course, in the Philippines it's such a complex of American naval and air bases. How much did you feel these bases were driving our policy, and how did you feel about these bases?

SIGUR: Well, I think they did drive it, as far as some people were concerned. Particularly in the Congress one had that feeling.

But that's not the way I felt about it. I felt the bases were terribly important, and obviously we want to keep a base if we can, but I think the preservation of a democratic Philippines should be an important element in American policy, regardless of the bases. That is something that is very important to us, because of our long relationship with the Philippines and also, as I say, because of the belief that I feel very strongly that security and the people's participation in their own affairs go hand in hand, and that you can't separate the two. As I say, I think the bases are very important to us. I thought so at the time. And very important to the Philippines. Not just to us, but to them. These bases mean a lot.

Q: How do they mean a lot? Is it just in employment or also...

SIGUR: No, I think it's more than employment. I think it's the whole question of stability; it's the whole question of the relationship of the Philippines to other countries in that part of the world. For instance, Stu, you have countries with whom the Filipinos have a very close business relationship who will say to them: If the American bases go, our investment goes with it. You have to understand that.

Q: I didn't realize that.

SIGUR: Because some don't see this country as stable enough. The American bases give a stability to the situation within the country--at least that's the way many people see it.

Q: It's much more than just a military strategic calculation.

SIGUR: That's right. Absolutely. And the whole relationship with the United States is seen as a stable element there. So I think it's very important to them, and to us, that the bases be maintained in some form, in some way. I don't know how it should be worked out. It just seems to me that it would not be beneficial to anybody to just sort of let them go without recognizing what they mean. But I do believe, as I said, that the growth of a really stable and viable Philippine democracy is very important, not only to them but to the region and to American policy. It's just, I think, something that everybody will kind of look upon as here was something moving ahead. If it fails, it won't reflect creditably on anybody, and certainly not on us, I would think.

That's why I think people talk about this multilateral assistance initiative, which we pressed very strongly and had pushed hard. That was not done solely for the bases at all. In the minds of some people, that may be true, but I don't think that was true in the minds of those of us who really set it up: Shultz, myself, Steve Solarz, maybe others, who pushed this very hard. We did see it in broader terms than solely the bases.

Of course, as we've moved along, the importance of the bases has diminished to some degree in terms of security. In terms of American strategic goals and interests and so forth, it's not the same. And you have very strong elements inside our military who say: We don't really need these things. And so that's something that's become a part of the equation, and we have to understand that and recognize that.

Q: Well, now, moving to a different topic, moving east or west, I'm not sure which, but Vietnam. While you were dealing with it, as assistant secretary, how about our view of Vietnam at that time? Today we don't have relations with Vietnam. How did you deal with it, and what were we trying to do with Vietnam? How did we see our policy towards it?

SIGUR: Well, our policy was a rather simple one, I think. I don't mean simple in the head, but I mean not too complex a one. That is, we fundamentally supported the countries of ASEAN in what they were trying to do. That is, to end the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, get them out of there, and therefore end the military threat to Thailand. And one of the basics at the heart of our policy was to enhance the security of Thailand and the rest of the peninsula there. This was our policy, and this meant getting the Vietnamese Army out.

That was at the heart of it, and at the same time, to ensure that the Khmer Rouge did not take over. This was also a very important element, and that's why we kept hammering on the Chinese all the time. Because the Chinese were critical in this. Talk about the Khmer Rouge all we want, the fact is, they can't go on without the Chinese. And the Chinese have been very, very supportive of them. So we were pressing all the time to try to get the Chinese to pull back from some of their support, and pressing the Vietnamese to get out. That was really what it was, and ASEAN was the one that took the leadership on this. We basically supported ASEAN's policies.

Q: So this was ASEAN asking us to say let's do this. This Cambodian thing was not a ploy in order to keep from the hard decision of opening up relations to Vietnam?

SIGUR: I don't think so. We always said that we would begin moving toward diplomatic relations as soon as the Vietnamese began to move out of Cambodia. Now I think, given that circumstance, given what has been happening, that the United States should begin to move toward diplomatic relations with Vietnam. I think we ought to move in that direction.

Q: Why were the Chinese so supportive of the Khmer Rouge who were really the pariahs of the world?

SIGUR: Well, of course, as you know, the Chinese supported them all along. The Chinese supported them from the beginning. In many ways, these were people who put into practice some of the ideas of Mao Zedong, in the leadership there. Well, we have to see it for what it is, we can't brush over that. That's a fact.

But also I think the Chinese were concerned, probably are concerned, about the possibility of Vietnam's not only controlling Indochina (that is, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) but also sweeping down through Southeast Asia. So they supported Thailand by taking steps against the Vietnamese directly: by invasion, by continuing artillery bombardment, and then by supporting the Khmer Rouge. All of this was part and parcel of their policy to weaken Vietnam, and I think remains part of their policy.

I think we have been able to make some inroads with them, as far as having them understand that for the Khmer Rouge to take over Cambodia is simply not acceptable. This is not acceptable to anybody, surely not to the international community. This can't be. That in fact any Khmer Rouge participation in a final government in Cambodia is unacceptable. I think the Chinese, perhaps, have come to recognize this.

There was a time, I think, when the Chinese didn't buy this. But perhaps, given what's been happening in China, just the whole international climate, better relations between China and the Soviet Union, for one thing (after all, the Chinese saw Vietnam as the tool of the Soviets and so forth), they're beginning to look at this thing in perhaps a different light. I think maybe they have to come to the conclusion that let's just end the thing if we can, let's get it over.

Q: It's no particular threat to China.

SIGUR: It's no threat to China. And what does it do for anybody to keep that thing going? I think the Chinese have probably come to that conclusion. Certainly I began to feel that as a fact in the last year or so when I was in the government, and in meetings that I had with the Chinese, including meetings in Beijing with Deng Xiaoping and Shultz, and the comments that were made, and comments here, as well, with Chinese leaders, that they'd just as soon get out of this. But obviously they want to continue to have influence in the ending of it and how it is concluded and what happens. How do they see that influence? Through the Khmer Rouge. And that's very unfortunate. And that's why we've got to keep pressing them, and telling them that you have got to pull away from those people, that you can't do it.

In several of the meetings that I had, alone or together with others, with Sihanouk, that's one of the things Sihanouk would always say, "You know, it's all very well and good to say that we have to push the Khmer Rouge this way, and we have to get them out and so forth, but tell it to the Chinese. That's the heart of the matter. That's the key. Don't talk to me about it, there's nothing I can do about it. I can't do it, but they can. Talk to them."

And so I think this is really what we're talking about here, Stu. I think we ought to be moving now toward some sort of diplomatic status with Hanoi. I think they have fulfilled, for the most part, their obligation of getting their troops out of Cambodia, which is what we always said was what we wanted, and that then we could begin to relax things. I think we ought to do that.

Q: Well, now, just one last thing, because I'm tying you down too long. I wonder if you could talk a bit about what were the main things, when you were assistant secretary, that were on your plate when you were dealing with the major power in East Asia, and that's Japan.

SIGUR: Well, obviously the trade relations, which just sort of overwhelmed everything else, and the security relationship, those two things. The economic ties and Japan's emergence as a more vocal member, if you will, of the international community, a more participatory member. Not only economics but politics as well.

In terms of Japan in the 1980s, I think a very important point was reached in the Williamsburg Summit in 1983, when Prime Minister Nakasone declared Japan to be a part, in effect, of the western alliance. They had never done that before, and that was a very critical statement. And that's the way it's been since then.

Now we have our problems, in the trade area and the security area and all this. The security programs have gone very well. The cooperative relationship that we've built with the Japanese over the last several years has been excellent from our point of view. Certainly that's the feeling of the Joint Chiefs and others in the Pentagon. The thing here you always had was to try to put in perspective the trade and economic problems that we had with the Japanese.

You know the old Confucian statement, Stu: An inferior man blames others; a superior man examines himself. I think so many of our problems with the Japanese show whether we're inferior or superior people or not. So much of our difficulties have to do with ourselves--let's face it--and have little to do with them.

Q: Yes, our lack of saving, the whole economic thing, a series of things.

SIGUR: Our whole economic problems. As has so often been pointed out, even if the Japanese did everything that we wanted in terms of opening their country, it would still have a minimal effect on the trade deficit. And that's true.

And so that was one thing we had to try to do all the time, control this kind of thing, and to be sure that we were able to do everything we could to maintain the Japanese alliance.

Now that's one of the things where Reagan and Shultz were pretty tough. They were very hard on this. They believed firmly in the U.S.-Japan alliance and relationship, and that this was key in all of this. There was never any doubt.

So that what we tried to do was to, as I say, contain it if we possibly could, and to keep it out of the political arena as much as we could, not to make it a political football if we could.

That was one of the reasons, in 1983 and '84, we had then-Vice President Bush sort of take charge of the economic trade problems, for about six months or so, to try to see if we could make some headway on it, which would be, in political terms, at least partially satisfactory, so that it wouldn't become a major element in the election.

Our feeling was that if you got into that, then you get into the whole question of the dangers of racism, and you've got to keep it out. And so we tried to do that, and I think we had a certain amount of success with it. Then Vice-President Bush accomplished a lot.

It wasn't easy, but always the president, the secretary of state, and the secretary of defense, over and over again, would make statements and speeches about the critical nature of the U.S.-Japan relationship and how essential this was.

Q: Was there any concern that the Soviets might all of a sudden become bright enough to do something? I mean, they seem to have been so ham-handed, particularly with the islands. That if all of a sudden they got some wisdom, that this could change things. Was this a concern?

SIGUR: We had some concern about that, but the Soviet track record was not good, so I don't think that ever caused any sleepless nights. We could all rely on the heavy-handedness continuing.

Q: We're talking particularly about the islands and repatriation and all this, all of which are probably of minimal military value.

SIGUR: Of course, if you look down the pike, I think the Soviets are probably going to make some major changes here.

Q: But it's too late.

SIGUR: It's too late. I don't think there's any question. Japan is a part of the western, democratic world and will remain so. After all the U.S.-Japan relationship is just so critical to us, so important to us, to us and to the world, given these two great economic entities.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

SIGUR: That's all right. I enjoyed it.

End of interview