

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

CONGRESSMAN STEPHEN SOLARZ

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is November 18, 1996. This is an interview with Congressman Stephen Solarz. It's being done on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Can we start at the initiation? Tell me when and where you were born and something about your family.

SOLARZ: I was born September 12, 1940 in New York City at Women's Hospital. It was at the height of the Blitz of London, which peaked three days later. My parents were actually divorced a few months after I was born. My father brought me up. When I was about six, he married the woman who had been my nurse and then I lived with him and her in an apartment in Manhattan. In 1950, his marriage to my stepmother was annulled and I then moved to Brooklyn to live with my aunt and her two sons, who were both older than I was. She had been widowed the year after I was born. My father went to live with his parents in Brooklyn.

Q: What was your father's type of work?

SOLARZ: He was an attorney. He actually just died a few weeks ago, two weeks short of his 90th birthday.

Q: Where did you go to school?

SOLARZ: I went to the public schools in New York City, PS 87 in Manhattan until fifth grade, when I went to move to Brooklyn, and then I went to PS 193, and then Andreas Hudde Junior High School, and then Midwood High School. I then went to Brandeis University for my BA and Columbia University for an MA in public law and government.

Q: Because we're focusing on foreign affairs, in high school or even earlier within your family or something, did you get much exposure to foreign affairs?

SOLARZ: Not really. I did grow up in a family that was politically very conscious and there was always a lot of talk about American politics. My father was a captain in the Tammany Hall Democratic Organization in Manhattan. But I can't say that there was really much of a focus on international issues.

My first real involvement and interest in foreign policy was due to the Vietnam War. In fact, I managed one of the first peace campaigns for Congress in the country in 1966 when I managed the campaign of a fellow named Mel Dubin, who ran against the 22 year incumbent, Abe Multer, who was a strong supporter of the war. Dubin was an opponent of the war. A funny thing happened on the way to Washington. Our candidate lost, albeit very narrowly. I met the woman who became my wife during the course of the campaign, so it wasn't a total loss. Then two years later, I ran for the state legislature against the dean of the Assembly, who had been there longer than anybody else and was elected to the State Legislature.

Q: I'd like to go back just a touch. Brooklyn and the whole New York think, you think of as being very strong ethnic enclaves which often mean that you get much more of a feeling about other countries, more or less from where the people came. Were you getting any of this in high school or not?

SOLARZ: Not really. First of all, the neighborhood I grew up in was overwhelmingly Jewish. While you're absolutely right that Brooklyn is preeminently a collection of distinctive neighborhoods, each with its own ethnic identity, there was limited interaction between the neighborhoods. So, while obviously there was a large Italian, Polish, and other communities in Brooklyn, I had very limited contact with them. So, I can't say that what subsequently became an abiding interest in foreign policy and foreign affairs was due to my upbringing. It really began with my concerns about what was happening in Vietnam, which I began to follow very closely, particularly after 1965 when it looked like we were bogged down in a seemingly endless conflict at a great price to the country in blood and treasure, without it being at all clear to me that the survival of western civilization depended on keeping the communists in Vietnam at bay. Then, of course, I got involved in this campaign for Congress in 1966.

Q: By this time, you would have been 26.

SOLARZ: Right.

Q: Where did you go to college?

SOLARZ: I went to Brandeis.

Q: What was your major there?

SOLARZ: Politics.

Q: Had the political bug bitten you at this point?

SOLARZ: I had from a very early age been very interested in politics. In fact, I had wanted a career in government, not necessarily in elective office, but in government. It just as easily could have been an appointed office, but the way the fates turned out, it was in elective office.

Q: You graduated in about 1962?

SOLARZ: Yes.

Q: Before you got engaged in this campaign of 1966, what were you doing?

SOLARZ: I was a graduate student at Columbia working my way through graduate school. Then I got involved with this campaign. Subsequent to the campaign, I got married, remained in graduate school, got a job teaching part time at Brooklyn College in the School of General Studies, and then decided in 1968 to run for the legislature.

Q: Your congressman that you were supporting in 1966 was running on an anti-Vietnam-

SOLARZ: He wasn't the congressman. He hoped to be the congressman.

Q: Where did you see the support coming from within the congressional district?

SOLARZ: It was absolutely fascinating. This was a district in which there had been no legacy of insurgency whatsoever. It was overwhelmingly democratic. The democratic organization controlled the politics of the community. There hadn't been a significant challenge to the congressman from the time he was first elected. So, there was no legacy of insurgency in the district on which to build. But during the course of the campaign, I learned the truth of an observation Victor Hugo once made to the effect that "there is nothing so powerful as an idea whose time has come." By the end of the campaign, we had attracted and mobilized over 1,000 volunteers who came out on behalf of our candidate, primarily because of their growing concerns about the war.

Q: Who were the volunteers? Were they mainly young college types?

SOLARZ: No. There were some of those, but primarily middle aged, middle class people, a lot of professionals, schoolteachers, small businessmen, housewives, people who were increasingly concerned about what the war was doing to the country and who saw in this campaign an opportunity to express their concerns in a meaningful way.

Q: What was your candidate's thrust as far as what was he saying he would do?

SOLARZ: He wasn't calling for a unilateral American withdrawal from the war. He was in essence calling for negotiations and an end to the bombing. There was a feeling at the

time that we weren't doing enough to seek a political solution to the conflict in order to facilitate an American withdrawal without unilaterally bugging out.

Q: What was your feeling?

SOLARZ: I believed entirely in what our candidate was saying. My view was, first of all, that I had never had any romantic notions about the Viet Cong [Vietnamese Communists] and certainly not the North Vietnamese. I had few illusions about the fate that would befall South Vietnam if the communists triumphed. To me, the real issue was whether what we were paying in blood and treasure was worth the objective of preventing a communist takeover. Of course, the main argument being advanced by the administration was that if South Vietnam fell, the other countries in Southeast Asia, like a series of dominoes, would fall as well, and that sooner or later we'd end up fighting, as President Johnson once put it, "in San Diego." If you accepted that proposition, then obviously it was important to make a stand in South Vietnam. I didn't accept it, however, because it seemed to me that what was primarily moving those who were fighting against the government in South Vietnam and the United States was nationalism and that the communists for a variety of historical and other reasons, had gotten the franchise on the nationalist issue. So, I felt that even if they did come to power, what would happen in the other countries in Southeast Asia would primarily be a function of the internal dynamics of those countries themselves. If they had governments that were responsive to the concerns of their people, which gave their populations an opportunity to bring about change through peaceful and political means rather than by revolution, they could stave off any subsequent communist insurgencies that might develop in their countries. Even if the communists were beaten back in South Vietnam, if the governments of the other countries weren't responsive, if they engaged in repression, if they left their people no alternative but to seek change by the bullet rather than by the ballot, there was a good chance that they would fall. So, it seemed to me that the whole intellectual foundation on which our policy was built was conceptually flawed. This isn't to say that a communist victory in South Vietnam would have been bereft of impact on the other countries, but rather to say that it wouldn't have been a determining factor. I would have had no problem providing limited amounts of assistance to South Vietnam to help them carry on the effort to stave off the communists themselves, but when tens of thousands of Americans were losing their lives, when we were spending tens of billions of dollars on the war with no end in sight, it just seemed to me that this was not a prudent investment of our resources and the time had come to find a way out.

Q: Were there any books or commentators at that time who in retrospect were particularly influential in your thinking?

SOLARZ: It was around this time that the "teach in" developed in the colleges and I actually did read somewhat extensively the literature on Vietnam. I don't recall exactly when some of these books came out. But books like David Halberstam's The Best and the Brightest and The Making of a Quagmire had a big impact on me. Of course, I followed it very closely in the press and in the journals.

Q: How did you find politics in your initial campaign?

SOLARZ: As the Chinese say, "Victory has a thousand fathers while defeat is an orphan." In this case, when you come this close, there are several factors. One was simply the entrenched power of the democratic organization. Second was the fact that while our candidate was a relatively wealthy man and financed the bulk of his campaign by himself, it was not by contemporary standards a lavishly financed campaign. I vaguely recall that we spent around \$70,000. If we had spent twice that, I have no doubt that we would have won. Another factor was that our candidate, as someone once said of him, was the "schleppiest messiah of them all." He was perhaps good at business, but he wasn't cut out for politics. First of all, he continued to run his business while the campaign was going on. Essentially, his campaigning was limited to showing up in the evening at coffee klatches or house parties that we set up for him. He didn't start the day going to the subway station in the morning and continuing to campaign throughout the day, as I did, for example, two years later, when I ran for the Assembly. I spent 16-18 hours a day, seven days a week, ringing every doorbell in 200 apartment houses in my district, going to the subways every morning, and so on. He didn't do any of that. If he had, I have no doubt, since he lost by only 950 out of 41,000 votes, he would have won. And finally, I have to say, his defeat was probably due to the fact of my own inexperience as campaign manager. I had never run a campaign before. In retrospect, I don't think I did a bad job. I took this fellow from nothing (He didn't even live in Brooklyn and had no local following and there was no legacy of insurgency on which to build.) and to get him that close was a major achievement. But having said all that, if I had done this previously, if I had perhaps insisted that he go out and campaign full-time, that probably would have made a difference. But I was fairly young at the time. I had never done this before. This was a very successful businessman. It just never occurred to me that I should put my foot down and say, "Look here, if you want to win, you have to go out" and campaign on a full-time basis.

Q: We're talking also about almost a different era of a non-professional campaign manager. Now you hire guns who've been doing this.

SOLARZ: Right.

Q: After this campaign, what did you do?

SOLARZ: I continued at Columbia studying for my doctorate.

Q: We'll talk about Columbia. Did you get involved in one way or the other... Columbia was a hotbed of...

SOLARZ: No. I wasn't involved in any of the campus political activities. Columbia had an unusual arrangement for graduate studies. You could take courses for what was known as "e credit." That meant that you would get credit for the course toward your graduate degree, but you didn't take any exams. You would get an "e" for the course, meaning an "e credit." So, you weren't, in effect, graded. I was somewhat impecunious in those days. I essentially worked my way through graduate school. What I would do was to work for a year earning money as a journalist and take all the courses for "e credit," but essentially

not going to class. Then I would save up enough money from the year I had worked to pay my tuition and the following year I would go to classes, take the courses for regular credits, and do the reading, etc. So, what happened was, I was asked to manage this campaign in February of 1966. I would have run out of money in June (This was at a time when I was going to school full-time.). So, come June, I would have had to have looked for a job anyway. They offered me what at the time seemed like a fairly generous salary to run the campaign. I think it was \$250 a week. But the important thing was that it would have given me enough money between when I started and the primary to save up enough to go to school for another year on a full-time basis. Plus, I believed very much in what the candidate stood for. I shared his concern about Vietnam. So, it seemed like a very happy combination. I had always been interested in politics, so this seemed to me like a really tremendous and very exciting opportunity.

Q: After the campaign, while you were still working towards your degree... Had you received your degree by the time you...

SOLARZ: No. I got my master's in 1967. Then I started work on my doctorate. I was studying for the oral exams.

Q: Your doctorate in what?

SOLARZ: In public law and government, which I never received. I passed the orals, but never wrote the last chapter of my dissertation. Then I also was teaching at Brooklyn College, the School of General Studies, in 1967.

Q: Could you talk a little about running for the state legislature?

SOLARZ: I decided to run for this Assembly seat in the 45th District, which was located in the congressional district in which I had managed the Dubin campaign. When I moved to Brooklyn, I had actually lived in a neighborhood, Midwood, which was right on the outskirts of that district. My wife had grown up in a neighborhood, Manhattan Beach, which was located in the district. So, to some extent, I had roots in the area both personally and through my wife. Perhaps more importantly, as the manager of the congressional campaign, I had gotten to know hundreds of people in the area. The fellow who was the assemblyman had been reapportioned into this district. He had for most of his career represented neighborhoods in another part of Brooklyn. But he was elected in that district in 1966. So, by 1968, when I ran against him, although he had been in the legislature for 32 years, he had basically only represented that particular constituency for two years. He was somewhat on in years. I don't think he had faced a serious challenge in decades. He seemed vulnerable. It was a paradox because he had been in for 32 years and ordinarily incumbents who have served that long are almost impossible to beat, but he had only been the incumbent for that particular constituency for two years.

Q: He was a Republican?

SOLARZ: No, a Democrat.

Q: When you're talking about running, you're really talking about running within the democratic primary.

SOLARZ: Yes. In an area like this, whoever wins the democratic primary or gets the democratic nomination is certain to be elected.

Q: Did you find that having run this insurgent campaign before... One thinks of the democratic machine, old Tammany Hall, which your father was a captain of. Do they welcome new blood?

SOLARZ: First, they clearly didn't welcome my entry into the race, but perhaps more significantly, I don't think they thought I had a chance, perhaps until the very end. I don't think they fully appreciated what we were doing. I remember one night we came back late to our headquarters, which was located over a Chinese restaurant. Inside the restaurant, a group of the leaders of the regular Democratic Club were having a late meal. We went into the restaurant and went over to talk to them and basically they said, "Stevie, you don't have a chance. Wait until Max goes out on the street. He'll eat you up alive." A month or two later, poor Max waddled out onto the street. He hadn't done it in decades, didn't know how to do it. Here I was, systematically, every night canvassing three or four apartment houses, ringing every doorbell, going every morning from 7:00-8:30 to the subways to greet people during the rush hour.

I did one innovative thing in that campaign. Most people got to work in Manhattan taking the subway. We had an elevated line in that district, about six or seven stations. I would get up in the morning and get on the platform going deeper into Brooklyn toward Coney Island, facing all of the people that would accumulate across the tracks on the platform going into Manhattan. I would have a loudspeaker with me. So, I would have a captive audience, usually of a few hundred people in between trains. I would have to look left and right to see the trains coming so I wouldn't be ignominiously cut off in the middle of a sentence. But I would talk to people and introduce myself. I used to hold up a \$10 bill and say, "Our assemblyman has been in office for 32 years, but nobody knows his name. If anybody on the other side of the tracks knows his name, let me know and I'll give you \$10." I did this in front of thousands of people. Only once did somebody know his name. I had the fellow come over and I made a little presentation of the \$10, but the pitch was, "If he's been in for 32 years and nobody knows his name, what kind of a job is he doing?"

Q: You won the democratic primary. How did the Democratic Party greet you?

SOLARZ: It was part of the tradition of democratic politics in Brooklyn that once you beat the machine, they were quite happy to accept you so long as you were willing to, in effect, live and let live. By 1970, I was able to work out a mutually satisfactory arrangement with the local regular democratic club, which then supported me.

Q: You were in the New York Assembly for how long?

SOLARZ: For six years from 1969-1974.

Q: What was your major or speciality or did you specialize?

SOLARZ: The New York State Legislature is probably the closest thing we have in the United States to a parliamentary institution in the sense that all of the key decisions are made by the majority party. Party discipline is extremely tight. I was, if anything, a minority within the minority. I used to say that the measure of my influence in the New York State Assembly was that in a legislative body with 150 members, I was given New York State Assembly license plate 152, which gives you an idea about where I stood in the pecking order. It was virtually impossible to get anything done. For example, you couldn't even offer amendments to bills on the floor of the Assembly. Whenever legislation came out of committee, it was always voted up or down. So, it isn't like in Congress where members of the minority through well-crafted amendments can actually have an impact on legislation. At first, I found it very challenging, but after a while it became increasingly frustrating. I used to refer to it as "the American political equivalent of the gulag archipelago" if you were in the minority, which I was.

Q: While you were there, were you beginning to get rested and try to figure out what else to do?

SOLARZ: I was. I had run for borough president of Brooklyn in 1973 and made an all-out effort but didn't win. The incumbent who was the candidate of the Democratic Organization won. He got less than 50% of the vote. A third candidate ran who also portrayed herself as an independent or a reformer who clearly siphoned a lot of votes off from me. I might have lost anyway, but I got a third of the vote and came in second. I think the incumbent got 46%. She got the remainder. If she hadn't run, it would have been a lot closer. Whether I would have won, I can't say. But in any case, when I lost that campaign, I began to feel that my political future was not very promising. The way I looked at it, first, it appeared that the Democrats were in a permanent minority in the Assembly. After the initial excitement of getting elected at a pretty young age and being able to play some role in Albany, and also the challenge of consolidating my position in the district had worn off, simply remaining in the minority in the Assembly indefinitely was a fairly bleak prospect. I had lost for borough president and I assumed that, if I couldn't get elected borough president, my prospects for city or statewide office weren't very encouraging. And our congressman was very popular.

Q: Who was your congressman?

SOLARZ: A fellow named Bertram Podell, who actually was a backyard neighbor of mine. We had a reasonably good relationship. What happened was that the incumbent when I managed the congressional campaign in 1966, Abe Multer, had barely been reelected. So, the handwriting was on the wall that two years later our candidate would probably have beaten Multer because he was going to run again, which he did. So the organization sort of moved Multer out. They put him on the State Supreme Court. Then they nominated in a special election this fellow, Podell, who had been an Assemblyman. In a special election, which Dubin ran in, Podell had a great advantage. It wasn't a

primary, so Podell had the democratic line. Dubin had to run as an independent. In a district where people reflexively vote democratic, that was just too much of an advantage to overcome. So, Podell was elected. He was the congressman and he was pretty popular. I was sitting on the beach, on Fire Island, in July of 1973 licking my wounds after losing for borough president, trying to figure out what to do next. Actually, I had begun to think of leaving politics or at least leaving the Legislature. I was a full-time assemblyman. In those days, I think the salary was \$15,000 a year and we got virtually no allowance for a community office or staff. In effect, I was spending my whole salary on doing the job. My wife worked. But this didn't seem like a tenable long-term arrangement. So, I had begun to think of getting a full-time job in the private sector and leaving the legislature.

But then in July 1973, while sitting on the beach licking my wounds, I found out from a friend who called me, who is now the executive producer of "60 Minutes," that Podell had just been indicted for bribery, conspiracy, conflict of interest, and perjury by Rudi Giuliani, who is now mayor of New York. He proclaimed that he was innocent, said he was proud to be public enemy number one of the Nixon White House and so on. My feeling was, since the next election was over a year away, that Podell's trial would be held before the primary and I assumed, if he was acquitted, he would run for reelection, and would undoubtedly prevail. If he was convicted, then he wouldn't run for reelection. So, at that point, I decided that if he was convicted, I'd run and if he was acquitted, I wouldn't run. But to my growing surprise and chagrin, he kept getting his trial postponed. It reached a point where it was clear that the trial wasn't going to be held until after the primary. This put me in a very awkward position because if I didn't run and he was convicted, then he would have to resign, there would be a special election, the party organization would control the nomination, and that would leave me out. So, I decided to run. I challenged him. There was, once again, a third candidate in the race. But it's not easy running for renomination when you have a string of indictments against you. So, I prevailed in the primary. Then he did go to trial a few months later. In a very dramatic cross examination by Giuliani, he asked for a recess and after the recess he came back into court and pleaded guilty.

Q: As you were running in this primary, what were the issues other than the fact that he was in trouble?

SOLARZ: That was it. His voting record pretty much reflected the sentiments of the district. To tell you the truth, I don't even think we did much research on his voting record. We probably could have found a vote here or there that I disagreed with, but the fact that he was running for reelection under indictment under circumstances where he had gotten the trial postponed, on a number of occasions creating serious concerns. We actually did a survey before the campaign began to make a judgement about how much of an impact the indictment had on him and we discovered a fascinating thing. That was that something like 75% of the people who didn't know he was indicted were for him, but 75% of the people who knew he was indicted were against him. At that time, amazingly, a rather substantial percentage did not know he was indicted. So that sort of suggested what the campaign strategy should be. In essence, what we said in our literature was that while everyone is entitled to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, still we wanted a

congressman who was beyond reproach and suspicion. So that essentially was the campaign. As it turned out, he did plead guilty.

Q: So, you won the primary and then would have been elected when?

SOLARZ: In 1974, the Watergate year.

Q: You came in as one of the Watergate babies. Before we get into the Watergate thing, which had real repercussions everywhere, could you characterize at that time in 1974 your district, particularly any feeling for foreign affairs?

SOLARZ: It was a predominantly Jewish district. I think it was probably the most Jewish district in the country. My guess is that it probably was about 2/3 Jewish. There was also a large Italian community and a very small black and Hispanic community. But it was predominantly Jewish, a lot of senior citizens.

Q: We're trying to capture the period. One of the things that I think is very interesting for somebody studying American foreign policy is the importance of congressmen, congressional districts, of the ethnic vote and of all the ethnic groups, one of the most effective ones has been the Jewish vote vis a vis Israel. Did you sort of put Israel up there as you went to Congress and say, "This is something I've got to take care of?"

SOLARZ: Israel wasn't an issue in the campaign because there was no disagreement among the candidates on what to do about Israel. But it was very clear to me that a record of significant involvement on Israel-related issues would be a considerable political benefit to me in the district. That, in fact, was one of the considerations which led me to go on the Foreign Affairs Committee. In other words, I knew that if I was challenged in the future, whoever challenged me would undoubtedly be a supporter of Israel as well. So, I wouldn't be able to claim that this was a choice between someone who supported Israel and someone who was opposed to Israel, but I did want to be in a position where I could claim that I had made a difference and that by virtue of my work in the Congress, and presumably my Committee assignments, I could make a difference in the future on an issue that would resonate with my constituents.

Q: You went in in 1975.

SOLARZ: Yes, January of 1975.

Q: This was quite shortly after the last major war between Israel and the Arab world. It was known as the October War, the Yom Kippur War, of 1973. Did you see as you came in anything that we weren't doing that we should have done towards Israel that was driven by your constituency or your personal feeling?

SOLARZ: During the Yom Kippur War itself, there was a period of a few days when we were seemingly hesitating on the airlift to Israel of emergency military supplies, but that bureaucratic logjam in Washington was broken. In fact, we did come in a very dramatic

way to the assistance of Israel in that conflict, provided it was an emergency aid package of \$2.3 billion, and then subsequently were very active through Kissinger's shuttles in trying to achieve some kind of progress toward peace, so I don't think there was any sense of disenchantment or discontent with American policy toward Israel at that particular time.

Q: The Ford administration was just in. From your perspective coming in, was it that they weren't taking a course that you were in particular disagreement with?

SOLARZ: Not at the time of the election or the primary, but subsequently not too long after, the disengagement negotiations in Sinai broke down. You may recall that Kissinger called for a reassessment of American policy in the Middle East as a way of putting pressure on Israel to make some additional concessions. That, of course, was a concern to me, as it was to my constituents. But I should make it clear that while I obviously recognized the potential political benefits that might ensue from being seen as a vocal or influential supporter of Israel, it also reflected my own very deeply rooted sympathies for Israel and what I believed to be America's best interests in the region.

Q: The reason this interview is taking place is that you were on the Foreign Affairs Committee. Within the House at that time, was that a hard assignment to get for a freshman?

SOLARZ: It wasn't easy. In fact, this was really the main reason why I became so actively involved in foreign policy as a member of Congress. It was essentially because I went on the Foreign Affairs Committee and because I believed very strongly that the way to have an impact in Congress was within the framework of the committees on which one served. My main interest in going there was to make a difference, not simply to serve for the sake of serving. The truth is that when I was first elected, if I had had my druthers, if it had been up to me alone to choose my committee assignments, I would have gone on Appropriations or Ways and Means. My primary interests at that time were still more of a domestic character, but as a practical matter, there was no way I could get on those committees as a freshman member. New York already had, I think, three members of Appropriations and we had at least two on Ways and Means. So, that was really precluded, and I had to consider what other committees to go on. Here, Jack Bingham, who was a congressman from the Bronx, really played a very significant role. He was on the Foreign Affairs Committee and he reached out to me and urged me to go on the Foreign Affairs Committee and explained what he felt were the benefits of the Committee. As I began to think about it, particularly in relationship to the other committees on which I might serve given the fact that Appropriations and Ways and Means were out as was Rules, which would have been another attractive committee, I came to the conclusion that both in terms of my personal interests as well as my political interests, the Foreign Affairs Committee would be a good assignment. Then I commenced a bit of a lobbying campaign to get on it and did get on. I think there were three freshmen that year who got on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Q: How do you lobby to get on a committee at that time?

SOLARZ: Of course, I contacted the members of the... I think at that time committee assignments were made by the Democrats on the Ways and Means Committee. I contacted them. I contacted the leadership. The chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee was Doc Morgan from Pennsylvania. I tried to mobilize some of the friends of Israel in Pennsylvania who knew him through my contacts in the Jewish community to put in a word on my behalf and I spoke to him myself. So, that is basically how I did it.

Q: So, when you joined the- (end of tape)

Could you characterize the members of that Foreign Affairs Committee and also, at that time the role that the Foreign Affairs Committee played in foreign policy during this period?

SOLARZ: I was very impressed with the membership of the committee. There were some men and women of real stature on it, people, for example, like Don Fraser of Minnesota, who subsequently became mayor of Minneapolis, Jack Bingham and Ben Rosenthal from New York, Lee Hamilton from Indiana... These were men of considerable ability. On the Republican side, there were people like Henry Hyde, Pete Beaster, Pete Dupont, and a woman whose picture you can see over there, with whom I became extremely close, Millicent Fenwick, who was elected the same year I was, who went on the committee. So, there were some very impressive men and women on the committee. Also, in the wake of Vietnam and Watergate, the Congress had begun to reassert its role in foreign policy. The War Powers Act had been adopted, legislation had been adopted giving Congress the right to veto arms sales abroad, and it also had the power of the purse and its control over the foreign aid bill. But it clearly was determined to play a much more active role in shaping American foreign policy than it had in the past when there was a widespread tendency to automatically assume that the President knew best and whatever the President recommended should be accepted. As a result of Watergate and Vietnam, there was considerably more skepticism. In addition, I arrived at a time when there had been a bit of a reform movement within the Congress sparked by the very large freshmen class elected in '74. Three venerable Democratic Committee chairman had been deposed which sent a very powerful message to the other committee chairmen that they couldn't preside in the kind of tyrannical fashion that often characterized their behavior in the past. This was matched by a Committee bill of rights and the devolution of authority to subcommittees. So, I arrived at a moment when the United States, as one of the two superpowers, was playing a very active role in world affairs, and where the Congress was becoming more significant as a participant in the formulation of American foreign policy, and where the opportunity for even junior members of committees to have an impact had been greatly enhanced by virtue of some of the internal reforms that were taking place in the Congress.

Q: Did you find that there was sort of a House spirit within the Foreign Affairs Committee that was Congress as opposed to Democrats or Republicans? I'm talking about the Foreign Service at that time.

SOLARZ: I think there was, certainly compared to what appears to be the atmosphere today, which I think is rather acrimonious, a much greater tendency toward bipartisanship on the Foreign Affairs Committee in particular. We had our differences, and Vietnam was one of them. The war in Vietnam was still going on when I first got there. But there was a distinct tendency to try to approach problems in terms of what was in the best interests of the country rather than on the basis of what might be the partisan interests of the different parties.

Q: 1975 was the last year that Vietnam really raised its head. It no longer existed after the fall of Saigon.

SOLARZ: I remember one of the most dramatic and memorable moments of my entire career in Congress in April of 1975, after the communists had broken through in the central highlands. I think it was in Ban Me Thout. Then President Thieu ordered a retreat and the whole thing began to unravel. As the communists moved on Saigon, President Ford proposed an \$800 million emergency supplemental which he argued would stave off a total defeat and would enable us to maintain a so-called enclave strategy. That supplemental was referred to our committee, which first had to authorize it. We had hearings. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs came up and we voted in that committee to reject the proposal. I think three or four days later, the government in Saigon fell. Sooner or later, it would have fallen anyway, but I remember feeling very strongly at the time that when that vote was cast, it clearly meant that it was all over. Of course, for someone who had gotten his start in politics because of the war in Vietnam, that had a very special meaning for me.

Q: I know that in my interviewing, Foreign Service officers who served in Vietnam often point not just to this vote but some earlier votes the feeling that we made promises to the South Vietnamese and they weren't fulfilled... I think it created a wariness, a feeling of congressional betrayal, and it wasn't just that particular time, but even earlier on.

SOLARZ: A few years earlier, the Congress had adopted legislation prohibiting any American military involvement in, on, or off the shores of Vietnam. That, of course, was a very critical vote. But this was, you might say, the last nail in the coffin.

Q: What was the feeling within the Committee at that time? Was there a general across the board feeling of "It's over. Let's...?"

SOLARZ: In the wake of the panic and the military collapse which seemed to be taking place, I think there was a feeling that this was a lost cause and that spending another \$800 million would simply be throwing good money after bad and that was nothing that could be done to salvage the South short of the reintroduction of American troops, which we weren't prepared to support and which the country wasn't prepared to support either. Therefore, it was best to bring the thing to an end.

Q: Did feedings run high or was the more or less a consensus?

SOLARZ: I think feelings did run high. It was not a unanimous vote. I don't recall what the exact vote was, but obviously there were people who supported the administration and who felt that we did have an obligation, or that American interests required us to do something, or that it would not look good before the bar of history if we pulled the plug on our Vietnamese allies... that if they were going to fall, it shouldn't be for a lack of American support. But obviously the other side prevailed. I think a clear majority felt that we had done enough, we had given the South Vietnamese a chance to fight on their own, they were a fatally flawed government, hopelessly corrupt, bereft of legitimacy, fighting a war which couldn't be won and which would probably be lost eventually anyway.

Q: When the fall of South Vietnam took place, did your committee get involved in the refugee problem from Vietnam?

SOLARZ: I got involved in it. I recall President Ford had asked Congress to authorize the use of American troops to rescue our friends from South Vietnam before the final collapse. He apparently felt he needed that legislation because of the prior legislation that prohibited the involvement of American troops there. One of the main arguments against it was that this was a clever ruse on the part of the administration to get authorization for Congress to reintroduce American troops into South Vietnam and once they were there, they would invent various justifications for keeping them there indefinitely. They would say, so the argument went, "We need troops to protect the troops that are there and then we need more to protect the protectors." In the prevailing atmosphere, where there was widespread cynicism based on what people felt were a lot of the misrepresentations that the Executive Branch and the President in particular had made during the war in Vietnam, there was a lot of opposition to this. I felt very strongly, even though I had been an opponent of the war, that we had a moral obligation to people there who had put their lives on the line in a cause which we had urged them to support, and whose fate I had no illusions would be a particularly pleasant one after the communists came to power. So, when that legislation came up on the floor of the House, I offered the first amendment which I ever offered in the Congress on the floor limiting the amount of time that the troops could stay in Vietnam for the purpose of rescuing South Vietnamese to 30 days on the theory that if the purpose of the mission was, as I believed it was, simply to get out the people who had been identified with us rather than to reescalate the war, 30 days should be sufficient. I felt that by putting in that deadline, it would diminish the opposition to the main legislation because a lot of that opposition was based on what I thought was the somewhat paranoid notion that this really wasn't a rescue operation but a reescalation operation. But the amendment lost very narrowly through a combination of liberals who didn't want us to be there at all even for 30 days and some, I suppose, who recognized that if that amendment was adopted, it would make it more difficult to defeat the legislation, and conservatives who didn't want any limit at all.

Q: Was there movement on the refugee side or did that move more towards just the areas judicial committees and all?

SOLARZ: Refugees were a continuing concern of mine throughout my years in Congress. There were a number of occasions in which I became involved... Two years

later, for example, in 1977, there were 15,000 Cambodian refugees who had fled from Pol Pot, who were being kept in a refugee camp along the Thai-Cambodian border in Aranya Pathet [town on the Cambodian border in the Thai province of Prachinburi]. The Thais were making threatening noises about sending them back to Cambodia. By this time, the genocidal character of the Khmer Rouge regime was becoming obvious. I first learned about it myself in August of 1975, when I went to Thailand for the first time and went up to the Thai-Cambodian border with a young Foreign Service officer named Charlie Twining, who was our Khmer watcher in Bangkok. He subsequently became our first ambassador to Cambodia after the Paris Peace Agreement. But the Thais were threatening to force these people back. That would have meant the execution of every last one of them. So, I developed legislation which I got Bob Dole to cosponsor in the Senate, authorizing the attorney general to parole these people into the United States on a blanket basis. The legislation was adopted. Using his parole authority, the attorney general did parole them in. It literally saved their lives. Just at the time it passed, the Thais were in the process of starting to push them back. Some of the FSOs in our embassy in Bangkok rushed up to the camp waving pieces of paper indicating that the United States was prepared to take them. Of course, from the Thai point of view, so long as they weren't going to stay on Thai territory, the Thais were just as happy to have them come to the United States. So, that was another aspect of the refugee problem in which I became involved.

Then, after I became chairman of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, I became very much involved in the effort to help the boat people. I participated as a member of the American delegation to the Geneva Conference on the boat people in the late '70s when hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese began to flee Vietnam by boat. Around that time, a terrible problem developed with Thai pirates who were attacking the boat people and raping the women and murdering the men and throwing them overboard. One of the things I did after a series of hearings on this was to get legislation adopted providing \$10 million for an anti-piracy program to enable the Thai authorities to try to do a better job in protecting the boat people and preventing the pirates. Then on other occasions with Cambodian refugees, where the rejection rates for those applying for asylum were very high, I got very much involved in an effort to get a review of the whole process in order to build in a greater measure of fairness. I remember, for example, that one of the Cambodian refugees who was rejected for asylum was Lon Nol's cook. Anybody who knew anything about the Khmer Rouge knew that if Lon Nol's cook went back to Cambodia, Pol Pot would have cooked him.

Q: As you saw it, what was the reason for the rejection? Was this just bureaucracy?

SOLARZ: I think bureaucracy has a lot to do with it. Obviously the burden of proof is on the applicant to prove that they're entitled to asylum. You're dealing with people who mostly don't speak English. The interviewers by and large don't speak Khmer. My impression has been that there is a kind of institutional bias against granting asylum, perhaps a degree of insensitivity. So, I think there were a combination of reasons which led to what seemed, at least me but also to others, an unacceptably high rejection rate.

Q: When you got onto the Foreign Affairs Committee, how did it break down? You were part of the committee as a whole, but the you had specialties. How did this work out?

SOLARZ: There was a procedure whereby at the beginning of the session, when the committee got organized, members would bid for the various subcommittees on which they served. You would go in order of seniority and choose which subcommittees you wanted to serve on.

Q: Were you pointed towards anything of particular interest or was it just "Okay, let's see what I get?"

SOLARZ: I would have preferred the Subcommittee on the Middle East, but that was filled up before I could get there. So, I picked the committees which at the time they got to me were the ones that were still open and I was most interested in.

Q: Which ones did you get?

SOLARZ: I went on the Asia Subcommittee and, I believe, the Africa Sub-Committee.

Q: How did you find the professional staff, the congressional staff, of the Foreign Affairs Committee at that time?

SOLARZ: As a very junior member, I had relatively little to do with the professional staff of the committee, which basically worked for the chairman or for the subcommittee chairmen. Occasionally, I would ask questions and they would provide answers. My impression is that they were competent, but it wasn't really until I became a subcommittee chairman, and then as I became one of the more senior members of the committee, that I had more significant interactions with the committee staff.

Q: Did you have a feeling that the staff had an agenda of its own, which often the accusation that is put out?

SOLARZ: That wasn't my impression. That doesn't mean they didn't. Certainly, if they did, I wasn't aware of it.

Q: Your main concentration was on the Asia/Pacific.

SOLARZ: After I became subcommittee chairman. But my restless energies could not be contained by the boundaries of my subcommittee. In fact, I was involved in a broad range of international issues that went way beyond Asia. For example, I became very much involved in the situation in the eastern Mediterranean, the conflict between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus. I certainly was very much involved in the Middle East and would usually spend about three weeks a year traveling throughout the Middle East, not only to Israel but the Arab countries, attempting to deepen my understanding of the political dynamics of the region. This was an area where I wanted to play a significant role. I felt that in Congress, knowledge was often the prerequisite for influence.

Then I subsequently became very involved in Central America, particularly in the early '80s when the situation in El Salvador and Nicaragua became major American issues.

Q: As a freshman congressman and as someone who had not been particularly exposed to the foreign affairs field prior to this, how did you bring yourself up to speed?

SOLARZ: Primarily by traveling. I came to Congress feeling very strongly that I wanted to make a difference. I quickly concluded that the way to make a difference was within the framework of my committee assignments. Since my other committee assignment was Post Office and Civil Service, the issues I had to deal with on the Foreign Affairs Committee seemed to me to be much more significant. And it quickly became clear to me that in order to make a difference, one had to master as best one could the intricacies of the issues with which the committee was dealing. I quickly concluded that the best way to achieve that mastery was to go to the various areas of the world where there were important issues at stake with which our committee was dealing. I traveled a lot - I think more so than most members of Congress - and got considerable flack for it politically, but I felt very strongly that this was the best way for me to do my job. I used to say to some of my newspaper of friends that I'm waiting for the journalist who writes a story about the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee who don't travel rather than those who do. But I would say most of my trips were to areas where there were important issues at stake over which our committee was exercising jurisdiction.

Q: I might say that anybody who looks at our archives will find that your name comes up quite frequently about visits, talks, arguments, quarrels, what have you, but all say that when you came you were out to learn and it was not what is often accused of Congressman, of getting out and sightseeing or shopping or something like this. You came informed and could give and take.

SOLARZ: I found it fascinating. Intellectually, I am a fairly curious person. But these were not vacations. On a typical trip, I would start out in the country maybe at 7:30 am with a working breakfast. I often had two working breakfasts. Then I would insist on a schedule which I must say the embassies almost without exception were very accommodating in setting up for me (I never could have done it without the help that they gave me.), but I would generally insist on a schedule where I would have one meeting after another without any break, generally about an hour's duration, together with working breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. So I would usually start out at 7:30 am and go until 11:00 or later at night.

But one of the things that amazed me was how much you could learn about the problems we had to deal with in a particular country in a relatively brief period of time if you went at it in a very intensive fashion. You could spend three or four days in a country and if you went from early in the morning until late at night, and you had access to the key people in the country, the leaders of the government, the leaders of the opposition if there was an opposition, leading intellectuals, your own embassy, other foreign diplomats, journalists, businessmen, students, and others, by the time you left, you came away with a pretty good fix on what the problems were, what the options were, what the possibilities

were. There was another benefit to it in terms of the learning experience which is not often mentioned. That is that back in Washington, the demands on a congressman's time are so multitudinous and kaleidoscopic that it's almost impossible to concentrate on a particular issue for a prolonged period of time. You go for a hearing on foreign policy to a hearing on domestic policy to meeting with constituents with some local problem and so on. You're just moving from one thing to the other.

When I went on these trips, I would find myself usually for a period of a couple of weeks, where I was essentially focusing on one problem. I would go to several countries that were involved in that problem - like in the Middle East for example, Israel and the Arab countries. But what it meant was that for a period of a couple of weeks - sometimes longer - for literally 16-18 hours a day, I was focusing exclusively and relentlessly on that one problem. So, it was a kind of intensive seminar. When the period was up, it gave me an understanding of the issue that I simply could never have gotten in Washington, where my opportunity to engage in that kind of learning exercise was limited by the kaleidoscopic character of my other obligations.

Q: How did you find your reception early on? Later on, everybody within the Foreign Service the type of trip you took. It was serious and concentrated. But early on, did you find that people treated you differently than they did later on?

SOLARZ: No. I found from the very beginning I was treated with courtesy and with respect in the sense that they may have known nothing about me, but I think the people with whom I engaged in our embassies respected the fact that I was a member of Congress. The smart ones (and most of them were smart) understood that this was an opportunity for them to get their perspective on events in the country and the region through to a member of Congress who served on a committee that was going to play a role in shaping our policy toward the area where they were assigned. The first trip I took as a member of Congress was in February of '75. I went to the Middle East. I went to Israel as my first stop. I dressed in dungarees and a kind of Lacoste type shirt on the plane. I had no idea when I left on that trip whether, if you were a member of Congress, anyone met you from the government or the embassy. I don't even think I had a diplomatic passport at that time. The embassy knew I was coming and I had asked them to set up appointments, but I sort of assumed I would go to my hotel and then I would tell the embassy I was in town. At any rate, I got off the plane. There was a long line of people waiting to present their passports. I was waiting in line like everybody else. After about a half an hour, some young fellow was going up and down the line saying, "Are you Congressman Solarz?" I was 34 at the time. I certainly didn't look like a congressman, dressed in dungarees and a Lacoste shirt. But he had come from the embassy to meet me and sort of took me through the procedures. That night, I had dinner at the home of our DCM, Nick Veliotis, who subsequently has become a very close friend of mine.

Q: I have a long interview with him.

SOLARZ: He had the country team at his residence. Actually, it was the residence of the

ambassador. If I recall correctly, we started out around 7:00 pm and went past midnight while I was asking hundreds of questions. I recall going from there to Amman via the Allenby Bridge by car where I was met by Tom Pickering, who was our ambassador there, and getting long briefings from him. Then I went to Egypt, where Hermann Eilts was our ambassador. I remember sitting up in his home until 1:00 or 2:00 am while he gave me a discourse about the politics and problems of Egypt and the psychology of Sadat. It was enthralling. I recall flying from Egypt to Syria, where I arrived at 3:00 am and was met at the airport by Dick Murphy, who was our ambassador. I had never met any of these people before. They all subsequently became friends of mine. They were men for whom I developed the greatest respect. They were a generation of American diplomats who preformed great services for the country.

But I guess this is a long-winded way of answering your question about whether I was treated differently at the beginning than I was later on. I can't imagine anybody could have been treated more seriously or with respect than I was in my very first trip as a congressman. I think the main reason was not because they had heard anything about me. I'm sure they hadn't. I was a *tabula rasa*. I don't think it was because I had a particularly engaging personality. It was purely and simply because they were professionals. I was a member of Congress. I also served on a relevant committee for them. I think they felt obligated to be responsive to my concerns and questions and probably also saw in my visit an opportunity to get across their own perspective on the region.

Q: Why don't we talk a bit about this period of time? When you went to Israel and being of Jewish origin coming from a district... How were you received by the Israelis? Did you have the feeling that they were coopting you or bringing you in? Then talk about the picture you were getting from the embassy.

SOLARZ: I think the really interesting question is how I was treated by the Arabs. But insofar as how I was treated by the Israelis, the Israelis were masterful at dealing with members of Congress and other visiting Americans in the sense that they were totally accessible. I never had any problems meeting with the prime minister, the foreign minister, the defense minister, the chief of military intelligence. I also would request opportunities to meet with working level people in the foreign ministry who dealt, for example, with Egypt and with Syria. I wanted to get their perspective on those countries. But they would be equally accessible to any member of Congress and, of course, many came - and to visiting American mayors, governors, and business leaders and Jewish leaders. I know of no other country in the world whose government is as systematically attentive to American leadership as Israel - perhaps for obvious reasons, because their security to such a significant degree depended on a cooperative relationship with the United States. But I can't recall a single request for an appointment or a chance to go here, there, or anywhere in Israel that was ever denied. In Israel for most of the time that I went there, I asked the Israeli foreign ministry to arrange appointments for me. I felt knowing that they would want me to meet with whomever I wanted to meet with, it would simply be a way of expediting the necessary arrangements.

Q: Were you able to have meetings with the West Bank Arabs?

SOLARZ: Yes. I met on many occasions with Mayor Freij of Bethlehem, with Faisal Hussein, with Mr. Shawa, who is one of the elders in Gaza, with Sari Nusseibeh, and with many other Palestinians whom I met when I was in Israel.

Q: Were you coming back from this initial trip with a different perspective than you had before?

SOLARZ: The answer is, yes, although I can't honestly say that it was due to this one trip alone. But certainly my many trips to the region did have a profound impact on my thinking. Prior to my election to Congress and my visits to the region, basically what I knew about the Middle East is what I had heard at a hundred United Jewish Appeal breakfasts and dinners. Like many American Jews, I had the impression that the basic problem was that the Arabs were not prepared to accept Israel and that their continuing objective was to throw the Israelis into the sea. As I began to spend time in the Arab world in meetings with all of the leaders, and with dozens and dozens of others from generals to students, journalists, and intellectuals... I remember, for example, in my first visit to Egypt in 1975 having lunch with Boutros Ghali, who was then a resident intellectual at the al-Ahram Institute, or Ali Hamdi al-Gamal, who is the editor of "al-Ahram," or Mohammad Hassan Haikel, whose home I visited on many occasions. So, on the basis of these trips to Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman, and Morocco, I came to realize that the great majority of the Arabs recognized that Israel was a reality which was here to stay, or that they didn't feel its establishment was a historic injustice, which isn't to say that if they could have pressed a button and have Israel disappear they wouldn't have pressed the button. But it is to say that they recognized, after the debacle they suffered in '67, after the American airlift in '73, after the acquisition by Israel of nuclear weapons, there was no way they could realistically get rid of Israel. Therefore, I came to conclude that the mainstream in the Arab world was prepared to make peace with Israel, if a peace could be established on a basis that they considered to be compatible with their sense of honor and dignity and also the political imperatives of their own world.

When I first went to the Arab countries, I remember, for example, crossing the Allenby Bridge by car. I have to say it was with a certain degree of anxiety, perhaps akin to how one might feel sauntering into Central Park at night in New York. I didn't know what awaited me. But what I basically found was that I was received with considerable courtesy. I understand there is an Arab imperative that if your enemy shows up in your tent in the middle of the desert, you have to take care of them for three days and then they're on their own, so to speak. But I was treated with great courtesy. I had terrific access. On my first visit as a freshman member of Congress, I had been in the House for basically one month. I met Sadat, King Hussein, President Assad of Syria. I think they knew who I was. They knew I was Jewish. They knew the nature of the constituency I represented. But I think they felt that this was an opportunity for them to get across their point of view to someone who represented a constituency which they, for a variety of reasons, rarely had an opportunity to address. To a large extent, that was their own fault. I mean, Israelis couldn't go to the Arab countries. I don't think American Jewish leaders

were particularly welcome. When I first started to go there, it was very rare for American Jews to go to these countries. So, the lack of contact and communication was largely due to them rather than to any lack of interest on the part of American Jews or Israelis. But be that as it may, when I would show up in these places, this did represent an opportunity for them to get across a perspective that I think they felt they had not had the opportunity to get across to others in the past.

Q: Were you making the point to them that they should try to get more American Jewish leaders to talk to them?

SOLARZ: Oh, absolutely. I thought that if others could hear what I was hearing, it would clearly have an impact on their thinking. When I would go to Israel and share with Israeli leaders what I had heard in the various Arab countries, there was a tendency on the part of some of them to suggest that perhaps I was being gullible, that the leaders were whispering in my ear what they wanted me to hear but they spoke entirely differently when they address their own people. My response to that was that I might find that persuasive if the only people I saw were the leaders.

I said that if the only people I had seen were the leaders, that might be a persuasive assessment. But in fact, I hadn't seen just the leaders. I had seen plenty of people who held no official position and who, therefore, didn't have the same kind of incentive to deceive me as the leaders might be said to have had. Plus, I met with foreign diplomats and journalists and people who were there assessing for themselves what attitudes were like. When I was more or less hearing the same thing from all sources, it seemed to me to give it a degree of legitimacy that otherwise it might not have had. I felt for sometime prior to Sadat's historic journey to Jerusalem that a peace between Israel and Egypt was possible in the sense that Egypt was prepared to accept Israel's existence. How far it would go in terms of a willingness to provide a real peace with trade, diplomatic recognition, open borders, and the like was more of an open question. But that Egypt was prepared to abandon any notion of driving the Israelis into the sea, I was pretty much convinced before Sadat came to Israel.

Q: This was your major first exposure to the foreign affairs apparatus. What was your impression of the various embassies and Foreign Service people you were meeting on this trip?

SOLARZ: I was tremendously impressed. I thought we had an absolutely first-rate team of ambassadors out there. Even the junior people I met with were fairly impressive. I remember, April Glaspie was my control officer in Egypt. She was our political counselor in Cairo at the time. I thought she was very sharp. I was impressed with her. As I said, I thought Nick Veliotis was engaging and informative. I thought Tom Pickering was extremely impressive. I thought Hermann Eilts was a superstar. I thought Dick Murphy was tremendous. I think this was a tremendous team that we had out there. It's sort of like asking somebody who went to see the 1927 Yankees for the first baseball game of his life and he saw Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, and so on and "What was your impression?" I don't think anywhere at any time at any place has the United States - at

least in my experience - had a more able team of diplomats than we had in the mid-'70s in the Middle East.

Q: Were you getting a mixed picture from the American embassy in Israel than you were getting from the other posts about whether Israel, whether the peace process and all?

SOLARZ: It's hard for me to remember exactly what was said by each. In general, my impression is that probably the country team in Israel was somewhat more skeptical of Arab intentions than the country teams in the Arab countries who I think felt that under the right circumstances that Arabs were prepared to accept Israel. That didn't necessarily mean they were prepared to sign peace treaties, but they were prepared to sort of acquiesce in an arrangement in which it was understood they weren't going to go to war against Israel. But I did come to the conclusion (I don't know if it was my first trip or after a couple of trips to the region.) that we needed to make a change in the personnel policy which seemed to be the standard operating procedure at the time in the NEA. That was that you had all of these career diplomats whose careers were basically spent in the Middle East who early on learned Arabic and who essentially spent their careers going from one Arab country to the next but never to Israel. I think it was felt that this might prejudice their access and capacity to perform in the Arab countries if they-

Q: I think there was the feeling that if you had an Israeli stamp in your passport-

SOLARZ: Right. I came to the conclusion that this was a very serious mistake. In a part of the world where policy was dominated by one fundamental issue, the Arab-Israeli dispute, it seemed to me that it was very important for our diplomats in the Arab countries, particularly those who were going to be making a career of it, to spend at least some time in Israel to be able to get a better understanding of the Israeli perspective on these issues. Over time, this policy changed and we did begin, I think, to self-consciously send our diplomats to Israel and then on to Arab countries and there was some interchange. I think that's been very constructive.

Q: What was your impression of Sadat when you met him?

SOLARZ: A man of considerable warmth. Of course, I met him before Camp David and before his journey to Jerusalem. I have to confess that I was as surprised as anyone else by the fact that he went there. He became more impressive to me after he went to Israel than he was before. Before, I saw him as a man of considerable warmth, a man who I thought was prepared for peace with Israel, but not a man, for example, of dazzling intellectual powers like, say, Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore, or for that matter even great charisma, but essentially a decent fellow who I think was searching for a way to resolve the conflict. But I certainly didn't have the impression that this was a man endowed with the most extraordinary diplomatic creativity and political courage which he revealed when he went to Israel. In the wake of that, I began to have a much deeper appreciation of Sadat, who he was and what he represented.

Q: Was it the Begin government that was in power?

SOLARZ: No. When I first went there, the prime minister was Yitzhak Rabin. I remember, I was one of the few members of Congress who got to know Begin before he was Prime Minister. He was leader of the opposition. I met with him. I have pictures of the two of us sitting in his little office which was very small. He used to look me up when he came to New York for various reasons. Personally, I liked him a lot. I read his books. But I think I was one of the few members of Congress who knew him when he became prime minister. The feeling was that Marach, which was the governing party, had a permanent lock on power in Israel. People tended not to take Begin seriously.

Q: Also, Begin and Shamir coming out of the guerrilla movement and all that were considered sort of right-wing extremists, weren't they, almost the equivalent to a Ku Klux Klan type of..

SOLARZ: I wouldn't quite go so far. I never heard anyone analogize them to the Ku Klux Klan. There were some who perhaps considered them terrorists, perhaps more so Shamir, who was associated with the Stern gang than Begin, who was associated with the Irgun. But of course, the Irgun had blown up the King David Hotel and there had been this very unfortunate, tragic raid on Darius Yassin, which was a Palestinian village which the Irgun shot up. A lot of innocent people were killed. But it was more that people just thought they'd never come to power.

Q: How about Rabin's government? What was the impression you got from Rabin?

SOLARZ: Rabin was very tough-minded. It subsequently turned out like Sadat that he was a man of considerable political and diplomatic courage who was able to transcend some of the previous limitations in his viewpoint. But when I first went out there, the Israelis who impressed me the most were Yigal Allon and Abba Eban, who was then foreign minister and Abba Eban was a man of towering intellect.

Q: He had been foreign minister almost from the creation. What about King Hussein of Jordan?

SOLARZ: Hussein came across to me as a man who was very much committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It used to be said in those days that he would always be the second Arab leader to make peace with Israel. It turned out that he was perhaps the third or second and a half. It was clear that he lacked the will and probably the ability to make peace on his own, but it was clear to me that he didn't envision driving the Israelis into the sea. I was also struck by his mannerisms. Here I was, a Jewish kid from Brooklyn meeting with this Hashemite monarch and he was referring to me as "Sir" all the time, which I gather reflected his Sandhurst education. But he would sort of sit on the edge of his seat with his hands folded together talking to me as if I was his professor rather than a young congressman trying to learn a little bit about the Middle East.

Q: And Assad of Syria?

SOLARZ: He was a very tough and formidable figure. He was impressive intellectually but gave nothing. He had none of the warmth of either Sadat or Hussein. I was particularly interested in meeting with him and trying to determine what could be done for the 5,000 Jews who remained in Syria and who were unable to leave and who really were second class citizens. Shortly before I got there, four Syrian Jews who had tried to escape Syria had been killed. I represented a community of 25,000 Syrian Jews in Brooklyn who were deeply concerned about this. I remember asking Assad if he would let these people go. Of course, unlike Moses, I didn't have 10 plagues in my pocket. But I remember his saying that he couldn't let them go because if he let them go how would he be able to prevail upon the Soviet Union not to let two million Jews go to Israel. Obviously, it wasn't in Syria's interest to have Israel strengthened with two million new immigrants. I tried to argue that, number one, I didn't think the Soviet Union cared much about what happened to the Syrian Jews and that it was hard to believe that his willingness to let 5,000 Syrian Jews would have anything whatsoever to do with the attitude of the Soviet Union towards its Jewish population. In any case, I wasn't very successful, although subsequently in 1977, I had determined in my meetings with leaders of the Jewish community in Syria that in addition to their general desire to get out they were particularly concerned about the fact that there were several hundred single Jewish women for whom there were virtually no eligible Jewish men to marry. The single Jewish men had either fled or were reluctant to get married because they didn't want to be tied down, which might preclude them from escaping in the future. In a traditional community where if women weren't married by the age of 19, it was a kind of social scandal or disgrace, this was a big problem. There is a picture over there you'll see of me with Jimmy Carter the day before he left to meet Assad in Vienna in '77. I urged Carter to see what he could do to persuade Assad to let these women go so they could get married in the U.S. Carter did raise it and Assad said he would be willing to let them go on a case by case basis if they were the recipients of marriage proposals from the U.S. So, I managed to get a dozen marriage proposals sent over there. Sure enough, he gave permission to these 12 women to leave. If you look right down there on your right, you'll see one of them getting married. I gave her away because her parents were still in Damascus. So, I sort of gave her away at her wedding. This was on the front page of The Times when these 12 women arrived. I got hundreds of letters from men around the country who wanted to marry these women.

Q: Such is diplomacy.

I thought we might stop at this point. We've just finished your first trip to the Middle East. This would be 1975.

Today is December 18, 1996. When you came back in 1975 from Israel and the rest of that area, did you get any reaction or were you conveying any reaction to either your constituents or the Israeli lobby on this?

SOLARZ: I don't recall that I was in the mode of delivering messages in the wake of that

trip. I had gone primarily to deepen my own understanding of the politics and dynamics of the region given the extent to which I had been appointed to the Foreign Affairs Committee. This was an area that I cared about personally very much and which was also a matter of great concern to my constituents. My recollection is that I came away from my initial trip to the region feeling on the one hand that there was an emerging willingness in the Arab world to accept Israel as a reality which they were not in a position, however much they would have liked, to exorcize out of existence, and that this in turn created possibilities for peace. At the same time, I also came away with a feeling that the differences between Israel and the Arabs on the substance of the issues in dispute, the degree of territorial withdrawal, the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the future of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights were so deep and profound that it was exceedingly unlikely there was going to be any real breakthrough for a comprehensive peace in the very near future. This was, of course, before Sadat went to Jerusalem a couple of years later.

Q: Were you also impressed by the small size of the whole problem? I'm talking about territorial... We're used to fairly large spaces. All these names which come down - the Golan Heights and Jordan and all... When you realize how much tension is focused on really a very small bit of territory, it makes you realize that there isn't much room to maneuver or cut lines.

SOLARZ: Of course, I was aware of that, but what really struck me was the sense of relative insecurity on the part of the Israelis, who believed they were surrounded by countries that were determined to throw them into the sea on the one hand and a growing recognition on the part of many of the Arabs that that was an objective beyond their means and that they might well be better off if an agreement could be reached compatible with their sense of dignity and the political requirements of the Arab world. But to bridge the gap between the two was obviously going to be very difficult. I certainly came away feeling that a precondition for peace was the further development of this feeling in the Arab world that Israel was a reality which was here to stay and that this in turn constituted a very powerful justification for continued American support for Israel since it was among other things our willingness to airlift billions of dollars worth of military supplies to Israel during the 1973 war that was one of the factors which contributed to this recognition in the Arab world that they simply weren't in a position to beat Israel on the battlefield.

Q: Did you get any feeling from this trip about the policy that Henry Kissinger had agreed to that we would not talk or deal with the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO]?

SOLARZ: I felt at the time that the PLO was a terrorist organization that had taken positions, particularly those embodied and enshrined in its covenant, which were clearly incompatible with any kind of real peace. First of all, they explicitly eschewed in their covenant any partial settlement which would explicitly recognize the right of the Jewish people to any part of Palestine. One could hardly expect the Israelis to relinquish territory to a movement which was explicitly determined to use whatever territories they got back

for the purpose of further launching attacks against Israel. So, at the time, I didn't see the PLO as a factor for peace in the region. But over time, I think they too began to recognize the realities. Particularly after the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, they clearly concluded that their interests would best be served by making peace with Israel rather than by seeking the elimination of Israel.

Q: Turning to another issue but the same one, the Cyprus issue, in July of '74 there had been a coup. The Greek supported Cypriots had tried to take over the island and turn it into a part of Greece and the Turks intervened. This became a very emotional issue, particularly among the Greek-Americans. We were cutting off aid to Turkey. What were you getting on this?

SOLARZ: The Turkish intervention in Cyprus, which followed the coup that had been launched by Nikos Sampson, a Greek Cypriot terrorist-

Q: A very nasty character.

SOLARZ: -who was committed to enosis, to unification of Cyprus with Greece, and who had the blood of many Turkish Cypriots on his hands, the Turkish military intervened. This was going on in the midst of my campaign for Congress. Since I was preoccupied with getting elected, I wasn't paying too much attention to developments overseas. It simply was never raised as an issue in the campaign.

Then in December of '74, a month before I got to Congress, the Congress finally enacted legislation imposing an embargo on military sales to Turkey. Then shortly after I was sworn in in January as a member of Congress, I began to get lots of letters from the Greek-Americans in my district urging me to support the embargo. I have to confess, I sort of took the easy way out, in the sense that from what little I knew of the embargo and what had precipitated it, my sense was that the Turks had acted very badly and that the embargo was justified. But I also felt that the embargo had already been enacted, so it seemed to me the issue in a real sense was behind us. So, without really looking into it very deeply, I simply responded to all the people who wrote me that, in effect, I shared their concerns about the way in which the Turks had acted and I supported the embargo and didn't think more of it.

But then a couple of months later, Secretary Kissinger announced that the Ford administration was going to make a major effort to persuade Congress to repeal the embargo. Since this was going to come before the Foreign Affairs Committee, to which I had then been appointed, I thought it would be appropriate for me to go out there and take a look at the situation and try to get a better understanding of it. So, I went on my first of what subsequently became many trips to the eastern Mediterranean. I went to Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus. On Cyprus, I met Mr. Clerides, who is now president but who was then one of the political leaders. I also met Archbishop Makarios the leader of the Greek Cypriot community. I met with Ralph Denktash, who was then and still is the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community.

Q: Except for Makarios, who died, they haven't really changed at all.

SOLARZ: They're all there. In Turkey, I met with Bulent Ecevit, who was still prime minister at the time. I also saw Mr. Demirel, who is now the president of Turkey, and several others. In Greece, I met with the prime minister. I believe I also saw President Karamanlis, as well as others.

To make a long story short, I came to the conclusion that the embargo had been a serious mistake and that it was counterproductive both in terms of whatever ability we might have to facilitate a settlement of the Cyprus problem as well as in terms of the viability of the southern flank of NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization], to which Turkey was the key. So, I came to the conclusion that, in terms of our own national interest, we would be better off lifting than maintaining the embargo. At that time, there was a fashionable theory in American politics that what the American people were really looking for were leaders who had the courage of their convictions rather than those who simply told them what they wanted to hear. So, I decided that since I no longer felt the way I had told my constituents I did feel, I had an obligation to let them know not only that I had changed my view, but why. So, I sent a letter to the several hundred Greek-American constituents of mine who had previously written to me, letting them know that I had changed my position and setting forth the reasons why. I quickly discovered that this theory about how the American people were looking for leaders who had the courage of their convictions was somewhat flawed. What they really were looking for were people who had the courage of their convictions whose convictions coincided with theirs. From a political point of view, I really alienated the Greek community in my district, which was a not insubstantial one. But I did feel very strongly that in terms of some very fundamental American interests the embargo was a serious mistake and needed to be rectified.

Q: In your travels to Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey, what were you getting from the Foreign Service or the State Department people - the ambassador and all? Were they telling you a story and how did you react to it?

SOLARZ: It's hard for me to remember explicitly what they said. I have notes somewhere that I could fish out or consult cables that they sent back. I think that what they did was to share their views about the impact of the embargo, which was what I was going there to look into. As I said, after talking to lots and lots of people, not only Greeks, Turks, Turkish Cypriots, and Greek Cypriots, but American diplomats and other foreign diplomats, journalists and others, I came to the conclusion, first, that there was no way that Turkey or the Turkish Cypriots would make the concessions that would be necessary for a settlement under this kind of pressure; and secondly, that in the process of denying arms to Turkey, we were undermining the viability of the southern flank of NATO, which was the key to our control of the Mediterranean and which also played a very useful role in tying down something like 22 Warsaw Pact divisions that would otherwise be available for duty on the central front. So, I thought that this was not serving a useful purpose. I also came to have a much better appreciation for the Turkish position in the sense that at the time I was elected to Congress I didn't know anything about the

London-Zurich Agreement and the extent to which Britain, Turkey, and Greece were all guarantors of the Cyprus settlement and the existing constitutional arrangements on the island and that when the Sampson coup took place, this created a legitimate basis for Turkey to exercise its rights under the terms of the London-Zurich Agreement in as much as it was the Greek Cypriots that had repudiated the constitutional order which Turkey, Greece, and Britain were pledged to defend. I also came to understand how vulnerable the Turkish Cypriots felt towards the Greek Cypriot majority on the island and the various depredations that they had suffered since the establishment of independence. So, I saw it really as a much more complex problem than I had originally perceived it as based on my very casual reading of the press.

Q: What was the reaction on the Foreign Affairs Committee? This was not the sort of thing members want to hear particularly from a young, new member there. The Greek lobby is a probably only equaled by the Israeli lobby as far as power. It's even more widespread. I think one of our ambassadors to Cyprus was told before he went out there by Jacob Javits of New York, "If you think you've had trouble with the Israeli lobby in Foreign Affairs, wait until you rouse up the Greek lobby."

SOLARZ: There is no question this was a highly politicized issue. Many members, including quite a few on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and many, many more in the House as a whole, took positions on this that were primarily driven by the domestic political implications of the issue. To the extent that there were Greek-Americans in their district who cared passionately about this issue and very few on the other side who shared their passion, they chose to support the embargo because they felt it would harm them politically if they opposed it. I wouldn't want to suggest for a moment that there weren't many members of Congress who genuinely believed that the embargo was a useful mechanism for registering American concern and as some would put it "upholding the requirements of American law" and as others would have said "to create the kind of pressure without which they would have said no agreement would be possible." I don't want to suggest that all of those who supported the embargo did it solely because of the Greek lobby, but there is no question that a very substantial number of members did support the embargo primarily and frequently exclusively for that reason alone. They were reflecting what they felt were the prevailing sentiments of those who cared about the issue in their constituencies.

But on the committee itself, my sense is that most of the members, even those on the other side of the issue, recognized that their colleagues often have legitimately differing views and we could disagree on the issues without being disagreeable. I think there may have been a couple who cared so passionately about the issue, either because of their own ethnic heritage or for ideological reasons, that this may have generated some personal resentment toward me or perhaps others on the committee who argued strongly that the embargo should be lifted. But to the extent that that happened, it really would be the exception. I'll give you one good example. One of the members of our committee, more senior to me, was Gus Yatron, a democrat from Pennsylvania who was a Greek-American. There is no question that he cared very deeply about this issue and yet even though I was on the other side of the issue, Gus and I had a very warm, personal

relationship. I came on a couple of occasions to speak for him in his district. I think he had a very high regard for me. I had a high regard for him. We had a good personal relationship. And yet we disagreed on an issue that was clearly at the very top of his list of priorities on the committee. Not everyone who felt the way he did about Cyprus may have reacted toward me with the same measure of magnanimity. But if my position did generate resentments on the part of any of my colleagues, I think it was the exception rather than the rule.

Q: During this Ford administration, were you called on to vote on the issue of the embargo?

SOLARZ: Oh, yes. The embargo wasn't lifted until 1978 and the Carter administration. But I quickly emerged as one of the leaders in the House of the effort to lift the embargo or at least as one of the more outspoken advocates of lifting the embargo. That was because of the fact that, first, I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee, so it was an issue that I was dealing with in my capacity as a member of the committee; secondly because I had been out there and I then went out on a number of other occasions and felt that I had developed a deep understanding of the issue; thirdly because I felt that very significant national interests were at stake; and finally because I went to Washington primarily because I wanted to make a difference in terms of the policies of our country and I felt very strongly the way to make a difference as a member of Congress was within the framework of the committees on which one served. Since I had been appointed to the Foreign Affairs Committee, that was the arena, it seemed to me, in which if I was going to make a difference, I would have to make the effort. Therefore, to the extent that this was an issue for the Foreign Affairs Committee to which I had devoted some considerable attention, it seemed to me that I ought to try to play as active a role as possible in trying to resolve it.

Q: These interviews are designed for people to understand how our system worked at the time. The Foreign Affairs Committee is a very important factor in foreign affairs. Did you find that the very fact that you had both traveled there, spent some time, and then continued to travel give you extra clout with the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee?

SOLARZ: The fact that I had traveled there ipso facto, the travel qua travel, I don't think, meant all that much. What did count was the knowledge and understanding I obtained as a result of the travel. My impression is that in the Congress, knowledge and information is often a prerequisite for influence. Members after all are harried and preoccupied with dozens and dozens of issues and constituency concerns and the like. It is manifestly impossible for any member to be well informed on the full range of issues on which they have to vote, as a consequence of which members tend to look toward those among their colleagues they believe have mastered the substance of an issue and whose views and values generally reflect their own for guidance on what to do themselves. So, to the extent on this issue, as on others, I may have acquired as a result of my travel a deeper understanding of the issues involved and their implications for the U.S., it contributed, I think, to whatever influence I might have had over others in resolving the issue within a

congressional context.

Q: Was the Foreign Affairs staff helpful to you? This time, wasn't it a single staff or was it a party-type staff?

SOLARZ: If I recall correctly, on my first trip, I went with one of the people on the staff of the full committee or perhaps one of the subcommittees. I don't recall his name, but I have his face in my mind's eye. The staff became much more helpful to me - in fact, very helpful to me - after I became a subcommittee chairman and was able to appoint subcommittee staff on which I came to rely very heavily for a lot of the work which needed to be done in order to prepare me both for my trips as well as for the debates in committee and on the floor that dealt with the issues that I was concerned with. But in the years prior to my becoming a subcommittee chairman in 1979, the full committee and subcommittee staff were of relatively minimal benefit to me. Essentially, the work they did they did for the members who appointed them, which were the chairman of the full committee and the chairman of the subcommittee and the ranking member of the full committee and the ranking member of the subcommittee.

Q: During this initial time, was there much cross fertilization between the Senate and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House on Israel and Cyprus?

SOLARZ: The only real contact which took place on any kind of systematic basis was within the framework of conference committees. The first conference committee on which I ever served was on the Foreign Aid Authorization Bill. Somehow or other, I got appointed even though I was a freshman member. I remember very vividly meeting in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee room on the first floor of the Senate side of the Capitol and the conference had sort of fallen into a kind of chaotic squabbling. Nothing much was happening. Then Senator Humphrey entered the room. He was one of the Senate conferees. In a remarkable display of personal and legislative virtuosity, within a matter of minutes he had sort of taken over the whole conference and gotten the thing moving with dispatch. My jaw hung open. I watched this man who had been a great hero of mine. It was a thrill to be on a conference committee with someone of his stature. But simply to watch him in operation and to see the affection and respect he had from his colleagues and how he was capable of moving it forward was a really memorable moment for me.

Q: The Ford administration wasn't in there overly long. But in this initial time you were with the Ford administration, how comfortable were you as a Democrat on the Foreign Affairs Committee with Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State and the policy that he was developing?

SOLARZ: I had great respect for Secretary Kissinger's intellect and often profound insights into foreign policy. He certainly commanded a degree of attention and respect which I don't think any secretary I served with subsequent to him ever quite achieved, although there were a number for whom I have a very high regard. But I also have to say that there was always a feeling about Secretary Kissinger that you couldn't absolutely

rely on the validity or veracity of what he had to say. In one sense, his inclination to shade the truth for the purposes of policy was not always conducive to the kind of confidence which a Secretary would like to have from the Congress. Somebody once said - I thought it summed it up very well - that when Joe Sisco, who was his Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and Henry both testified, they can say the same thing, but from Joe you believe it and Henry you don't believe it.

Q: Looking at the Middle East, did Iran raise its head at all during this first time?

SOLARZ: It may have been in the Carter administration that the issue came up of whether to sell the AWACs [Airborne Warning and Control System] to Iran. Of course, there were a lot of concerns about the human rights situation in Iran and the extent to which Savak, the secret police in Iran, were arresting and torturing dissidents. There was a feeling on the part of many members of Congress that the Shah presided over a rather repressive regime. At the same time, of course, it was obvious that Iran was a country of considerable strategic importance. So, it was a subject of some controversy. There was a big issue over whether to sell the AWACs to Iran. Our committee had hearings on that.

Q: What about the megaproblem, relations with the Soviet Union? Did you find yourself more or less concentrating on the Middle East and leaving the East-West relationship?

SOLARZ: I tended to focus primarily on international issues that were coming before our committee and on which the Congress was likely to be voting. Those were the issues on which I felt I could potentially make a difference and on which Congress had the maximum leverage on our foreign policy. So, when there were arms sales to Middle East countries that the Congress at the time was in a position to veto by adopting resolutions of disapproval, if that became an issue, it was something in which I was involved. There were relatively few issues that came before our committee that involved the Soviet Union. We didn't vote, for example, on the Defense budget. Arms control treaties would go to the Senate. So, while clearly we would have hearings and were concerned about our relationship with the Soviet Union, it wasn't an issue to which I devoted special attention. There were very few issues relating to the Soviet Union that actually required votes before our committee.

Q: Obviously, this was a very important element in our NATO calculation, what we did with Turkey. Did the Defense Department put up a persuasive argument about "We're hurting our greater interests by doing this to Turkey?"

SOLARZ: I don't think there was any difference between DOD and State on this issue. They both sang from the same hymnal. But my views were primarily influenced not so much by what I heard in Washington, but what I had heard and seen in the region during the course of my trips there.

Q: Before we leave the Ford administration, did apartheid in South Africa come in front of you at all?

SOLARZ: It was an issue which I did care deeply about. In fact, on July 4, 1976 when we celebrated the bicentennial, I chose to go to South Africa because I felt that of all the countries in the world, that was the one where one could most meaningfully try to reaffirm some of the fundamental principles and values upon which our own country had been founded two centuries earlier. That was the beginning for me of a deep and continuing involvement with South Africa and the struggle to bring an end to apartheid.

I subsequently became chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa in 1979. That significantly increased the amount of time and attention I gave to South Africa. I went there on several occasions. I introduced the first legislation to impose sanctions against South Africa. I held many hearings on the issue. I got to know the leaders of both the white and the black communities in South Africa. I traveled around the country. I wrote a number of reports about it. Then, even after I left as chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa to assume the chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Asia, I remained actively involved in the effort in the House to pass sanctions legislation against South Africa.

Q: What were your impressions when you went to South Africa? What had focused your interest on that?

SOLARZ: My interest had emanated from my sense that the apartheid system embodied a monumental injustice. It didn't take much imagination for me as a Jew to empathize with and to understand the psychological and political consequences of apartheid for the black majority in that country. I remember as a youngster having been very impressed by Helen Suzman, who for many years was the only white opposition member of Parliament. In fact, I have my picture with her over there taken on July 4, 1976, at a reception at the U.S. embassy in Pretoria. I came to know Helen very well. She was and is one of my great heroines. Then, of course, I had been very moved by the Sharpeville massacre. I believe there had been another massacre in Soweto before I went there in 1976. It just seemed to me that this system was the embodiment of racism and injustice and that as a multiracial society ourselves, we should try to do whatever we could to make possible a transition to a new political dispensation in South Africa based on majority rule and minority rights. Interestingly, I came to have great sympathy and understanding in a way for the white community in South Africa, whose achievements in building up South Africa I came to deeply admire and whose anxieties about what might happen to them if they relinquished power I could understand even if I didn't share. I think the transition which has taken place in South Africa is really one of the great political miracles of our time.

Q: At one point, I thought it was going to be the "Night of Long Knives." Did you see a certain parallel at the time between the whites and the Israelis in a sea of Arab things?

SOLARZ: Not really. That is an interesting analogy, but the Israelis were in my view committed to a genuine democracy in which their Arab citizens were entitled to vote and were even represented in the Knesset, whereas in South Africa blacks not only weren't in the Parliament but they weren't entitled to vote. In fact, they had largely been stripped of their South African citizenship as a result of the homelands policy.

I should also say that in my various trips to South Africa, I was deeply impressed by the quality and character of the black leadership in the country. It was one of the reasons I felt that, if somehow or other the whites could be persuaded to permit the blacks to fully participate in determining the destiny of the country, there were very good prospects for success, because of the calibre of the black leadership I got to know during the course of my visits there.

Q: How comfortable were you with our policy during this first term with South Africa and with what our embassy and consulate were doing there?

SOLARZ: My recollection is that I felt at the time that we were too cozy with the regime and not nearly as outspoken as we should have been in our opposition to apartheid. In those years, there was very little support for the establishment of the kind of sanctions that we were ultimately able to impose a decade later. So, I wasn't thinking in those days of comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. But I was already beginning to think of the need for a much more vigorous opposition to apartheid than had been the case in prior administrations.

Q: Did you have any idea within the Foreign Affairs Committee about South Africa? Was it not looming very large on its agenda?

SOLARZ: It wasn't nearly as important in the mid-'70s as it became in the 1980s when it emerged as a really major issue. But I was concerned about it because of the analogies I saw between the treatment of the blacks in South Africa and the treatment of the Jews in Germany in the early 1930s. This is a somewhat risky analogy to use because there are a lot of people who will correctly point out that South Africa, for all of the horrors of apartheid, never embarked on a "final solution" of the "black problem" by systematically exterminating millions of blacks. But when I make the analogy, I make it very consciously to the early years of the Nazi tyranny when the extermination of the Jews wasn't taking place but where the Nuremberg laws imposed all sorts of civil and economic disabilities against them which were not unlike apartheid in South Africa.

Q: During the election in 1976, Carter was running. Did you find that foreign affairs played any part in your campaign or Carter's campaign as it impacted on your district?

SOLARZ: Zero. The reason is that in my district the Democratic Party was so solidly entrenched that whoever won the democratic nomination was assured of reelection. I used to say that if Martin Borman got the democratic nomination-

Q: Martin Borman being Hitler's chief of staff.

SOLARZ: Whose whereabouts have never been determined after he fled the bunker in the closing days of the war. He would get elected if he got the democratic nomination in my district. But the fact was that there was no primary in that year. In fact, after I won the primary to get the democratic nomination in 1974, until my last election when they

redistricted me, I never had a primary. So, in effect, I never really had a campaign. There were always Republicans on the ballot against me, but they never, except in one year, bothered to campaign. So, in effect, I never really waged a campaign for reelection.

Q: You had gotten this taste for foreign affairs during your time there. What was your impression of Jimmy Carter's campaign and his approach? He was certainly not a known quantity on the scene. He had come out of Georgia.

SOLARZ: I certainly supported Carter, but I wasn't particularly active in his campaign, when he ran the first time. I became somewhat more active when he sought reelection. In fact, we have a picture here. You'll see I endorsed him fairly early on and brought down several of the key people in my district to the White House to meet with him. He was being challenged by Ted Kennedy at the time. They probably felt that the fact that someone who was thought of as a relatively liberal congressman from New York, which presumably would be Ted Kennedy country, was supporting him. But back in '76, I wasn't at all active in the campaign. I had supported Mo Udall for the nomination in 1976. He was a colleague in the House for whom I had the highest regard. Obviously, I voted for Carter and preferred him to Ford, but I didn't know him well at the time.

Q: During the Carter administration, human rights were one of Carter's major fields. I would assume that this was something that you embraced with some enthusiasm.

SOLARZ: Yes, I did. I thought that his willingness to make human rights one of the foundations of his foreign policy was very commendable. I think it served the country well. That left open a very serious question about how you balance human rights against the other foreign policy concerns and objectives of the nation. Obviously, it wasn't the only factor driving our foreign policy, but to the extent that he gave it a degree of prominence that it didn't enjoy in the past, I thought that was very useful.

Q: Patt Derian became sort of the spear holder for the human rights line in the State Department. How was she regarded by the Foreign Affairs Committee?

SOLARZ: I can't honestly recall any discussions about her. I'm sure there must have been some, but they escape me now. My recollection is that she was viewed as an outspoken champion of human rights, but I have the impression also as someone who was never prepared to contemplate in any situation whatsoever the subordination of our human rights concerns to our strategic or geopolitical concerns. I came to believe very strongly that while we did have a moral and political interest in advancing the cause of human rights, we also had other objectives and concerns which had to be taken into consideration, such as containing the Soviet Union, moving toward peace in the Middle East, and that there were times and occasions when human rights would have to take a subordinate role in the light of other objectives which in a particular time and place may have been even more important to the nation.

Q: Going to Cyprus and the lifting of the embargo in 1978, was that a major issue for you in the Foreign Affairs Committee?

SOLARZ: That was one of the most controversial issues in the committee. I think the committee was fairly evenly divided on it. I recall some of the debates we had in the committee. I remember one in particular where I learned a very important lesson. We were debating and voting on legislation to lift the embargo. I think on the role call it passed by one vote, but before the result was announced word came in that one of the members of the committee's (I think it was Mike Harrington of Massachusetts) plane had been delayed because of fog or something and he had just arrived at National Airport and was coming by car to the committee room. The issue was whether to hold open the vote. He was going to be there in a few minutes. He was known as a supporter of the embargo. If he had actually been permitted to vote, it would have been a tie and then the legislation would have failed. You need a majority to report it out of committee. I remember Lee Hamilton, who is now the ranking Democrat on the committee, who was a supporter of lifting the embargo, moving to keep the vote open until Harrington could arrive as a courtesy to him. Instinctively, I had been in favor of closing the vote off. I felt strongly that it was important to lift the embargo, the vote had been taken, and Harrington wasn't there, even though it was no fault of his own. My instincts were that you move forward. But I came to believe that what Hamilton had done was the right thing. It was based upon a profound insight that in the Congress and in the committee like ours, we're always dealing with controversial issues. Today it's Cyprus. Tomorrow it's the Middle East. The next day it's Central America. It's very important to have a spirit of comradery and collegiality among the members. By agreeing to keep the role call open even though it meant that the position he advocated would lose at that particular time, he made a larger contribution to the creation of an atmosphere which would enable the committee to work more effectively on other issues in the future. I think that was a very commendable gesture on his part and I learned what I thought was a very important lesson from it, which is that no immediate partisan or ideological advantage is worth acting in ways that diminish the sense of collegiality which is necessary in order to maximize the effectiveness of the committees of the Congress.

Q: That is one of the lessons I was told very early on in diplomacy, that there are no such things as diplomatic victor. If you've got a "diplomatic victory," your put something over or poured something on to somebody. That problem, whatever it is... The countries are going to remain. It's going to come back. You've got to reach something where you both agree that it's mutually beneficial. Otherwise, it really won't work.

SOLARZ: Exactly.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point? We're talking about the 1977-1981 period, the Carter period. I would like to talk about the Camp David process, any issues like AWACs or military equipment within the Middle East, any developments during the Carter period dealing with South Africa.

Today is March 28, 1997. This is an insert into the interview with Stephen Solarz. Why

don't we talk about Africa? We haven't touched on that in other interviews. When did you first get involved with African affairs?

SOLARZ: On July 4, 1976, I made my first visit to Africa. I went to South Africa. I felt that on a day when we were celebrating our own bicentennial, there was no other place in the world where one could make a more meaningful affirmation of the American commitment to the belief that all men are created equal. I went to South Africa because I was deeply offended by the apartheid system and wanted to try to get a better understanding of what was going on there and what we might do about it. The Soweto massacre took place in June, so it was a hot issue. I also went on that occasion to Rhodesia, where there was a war of liberation going on. During the course of that trip, I also went to Mozambique, where I was the first official American to visit Robert Mugabe, the leader of Zanu, one of the two movements that comprised the Patriotic Front. He is now the prime minister of Zimbabwe.

Q: Was there any political pressure on this? Did your district have many blacks?

SOLARZ: I think about 9% of my congressional district was black, so it was not a very significant voting block. In fact, I remember once I gave a talk at a black church in Coney Island and figured that this might be one of the few groups in my district that would share my interest in the situation in South Africa. This was in the late '70s, when I had started to spend a lot of time in southern Africa. In 1979, I had become chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa. At the end of my talk, which was almost exclusively about South Africa and its implications for American policy, as I left the church, one of the parishioners said to me, "You know, Congressman, what you said about South Africa was fine, but I think most members of the church are much more interested in what's going on here in Coney Island." So, what I did in southern Africa was not in any way whatsoever a response to concerns or pressure on the part of my constituency, but emanated entirely from my own view of America's interest and values as they apply to that part of the world.

Q: Within Congress at that time in 1976, there was the Black Caucus. It was the Ford administration. Was there much interest in Africa at that time?

SOLARZ: I think there was minimal interest in southern Africa. The effort to impose sanctions had not really gotten underway. The ANC (African National Congress) at that point, the head of which was Nelson Mandela, who was serving a life sentence in prison, and was led by Oliver Tambo, who was in exile, was barely a blip on people's screens. When I first went there, it was by no means clear whether the African National Congress or the Pan African Congress would emerge as the leading black liberation movement in the country. So, it was not something that engaged the attention of most people around here. The apartheid regime, however objectionable, was thoroughly entrenched, and there wasn't much that seemingly could be done about it.

Q: Did you see a difference between the ANC and the Pan African Congress as far as outlook and how they were going to do it at that time?

SOLARZ: At first I didn't. At that time, the impression that I had was that neither of these organizations posed even a remote threat to the viability let alone the survival, of the regime. But as I began to spend more time in southern Africa, I did come to appreciate that there were some significant ideological differences, primarily relating to the extent to which the ANC was very consciously committed to a non-racial policy and prided itself on the inclusion of some whites in its leadership structure, whereas the PAC, the Pan African Congress, was committed to a kind of black power approach. Also, I would say that by the late 1970s, in the competition for the allegiance of the black masses, the ANC had clearly emerged in the predominant position.

Q: Coming back to as you saw it in 1976, how did you see the approach of the Department of State? When we talk about Africa, we're really talking about south of the Sahara, aren't we?

SOLARZ: Sub-Sahara, although I was very much involved at the end of the '70s in the whole issue of the Western Sahara. I was involved in Morocco and in Algeria.

Q: How did you see the State Department? What was the approach towards Africa at that particular time?

SOLARZ: The view in the State Department seemed to be that the South African regime, whatever its imperfections - and there was no one here who defended apartheid - was nevertheless firmly in power with no threat on the horizon to their ability to preserve their power and that we had a variety of fish to fry. South Africa had a strategic location at the tip of the continent. There were a number of people who felt that it was important it remain in friendly hands because it could potentially control the sealanes from the Persian Gulf. There was also the feeling that we had economic interests there and also that the eventual abolition of apartheid could be a very long-term proposition. At that time, no one was even talking about sanctions, so it wasn't really necessary for the Department to oppose it. But essentially they wanted to deal with it as a regime which, however objectionable, nevertheless was in power and which sought a friendly relationship with the United States.

Q: What about the movements in Rhodesia and Mozambique? How did you feel about those?

SOLARZ: First of all, by the time I got involved in African policy, the Portuguese had already left Mozambique and Frelimo had come to power. In the case of Rhodesia, where there was a significant liberation struggle underway, I thought it was only a matter of time before the white regime was obligated to yield power. I felt, based on my meetings with both Mugabe and Nkomo, that the concerns which had been expressed over here, particularly by some of the more conservative members of Congress, that these were Marxist Leninists that would impose a dictatorship were not founded in fact. These people in the Patriotic Front were primarily committed to achieving majority rule rather than the imposition of a Leninist political system with a state controlled economy.

Q: At this particular time, Henry Kissinger was Secretary of State. He was seen by many to see things in a bipolar way, that almost any issue in any part of the world was really communist versus western conflict. Did you see that?

SOLARZ: No, I didn't. I thought that what was involved was not a struggle between East and West, but a struggle between the indigenous majority and the white minority for political power in the country. I recall one of Kissinger's initiatives at this time was the establishment of some kind of a development fund for Rhodesia. It was half a billion dollars. The theory behind it was that this would be a way to buy the whites out in exchange for their relinquishing power. But I vehemently opposed it on the grounds that I didn't think one ought to reward these people for the establishment of a racist regime. Eventually, it went nowhere.

Q: On this initial trip, what were you getting from the Foreign Service posts? Were they seeing things in the Kissingerian complex?

SOLARZ: I don't recall that the embassy in Pretoria saw it that way. We did not have diplomatic relations with Rhodesia, so there was no post there. But in South Africa, I don't think there was any sympathy on the part of the embassy for the regime. It was a government that they dealt with. I think they felt eventually apartheid would have to go, but no one thought it would be within the foreseeable future. I do recall that in my first few trips to South Africa, I would always come away wondering in a certain sense why apartheid still existed. Virtually everybody I met with would say that it was essentially an unacceptable system and it had to go. Then I began to realize that the embassy was arranging for me to meet with a range of people which went from black activists who were obviously opposed to apartheid to the "Verlichte," or the so-called "enlightened" Afrikaaners who, while not prepared to abandon the system immediately, nevertheless recognized that it was not sustainable over the long term. I kind of came to the conclusion that I obviously must be missing something here. I began to realize that I never really met with the so-called "Verkrampte" Afrikaaners, the hardline Afrikaaners. So, on one of my trips, in 1980, I told the embassy I wanted them to arrange for me to meet with some rural Afrikaaners who were more representative of the base of the national party's political support. They arranged for me to stay overnight with an Afrikaaner farm family in Wombat about two hours by car outside Pretoria. This couple had invited some of their Afrikaaner neighbors to have dinner with me at their home. They were personally lovely people, but it became clear to me during the course of that evening what the underlying political reality of the country was really like for the Afrikaaner regime, in the sense that it emerged very clearly in the course of our discussion that these people essentially were convinced the blacks in South Africa were totally inferior and that they not only were incapable of ruling the whites, they were incapable of ruling themselves. They would point to what happened in Uganda under Idi Amin, and in the Central African Empire under the Emperor Bokassa. They had convinced themselves that if apartheid were abolished chaos and conflict would be the inevitable lot of South Africa. I recall one of the people present was the parliamentarian from that part of the country and a national party member. It was obvious to me that if I represented that area, and wanted to remain in Parliament, I'd have to take a hardline and unyielding position as well. The next day (I

stayed over that night), I asked them if there was anyone in the area, another Afrikaaner, who felt differently than they did. They said, yes, there was actually one fellow who had a big farm a few miles away. I asked if I could meet him. They brought me over. I was introduced to this chap. He looked like a combination of John Lindsay and Robert Redford, a strikingly handsome man. I introduced myself and said, "I've been meeting with some of your neighbors and talking about the situation here. They told me you're the one person in the area who thinks different and I'm just curious if that is true and if so why?" He said, "Yes, I think apartheid is wrong and it needs to go." I said, "Why do you feel that way and the others don't?" He said, "Well, I'm not a particularly religious man, but I do read the Bible and I think that what we're doing is wrong and I don't want to pass the problem onto my children." That actually gave me an enormous amount of hope. I thought that if someone like this farmer in the middle of rural South Africa could work his way through to such a conclusion, perhaps others might over time as well.

Q: Were you talking to people in the government?

SOLARZ: Yes, I would meet when I came there with the foreign minister, Pik Botha. On one occasion, in the early '80s, I met with F. W. de Klerk, who at the time was the minister of education. I saw him at his home on a Sunday in Pretoria. Subsequently, after he became president and launched his initiative which led to the release of Nelson Mandela and the abolition of apartheid, I reviewed my notes for that meeting and I have to say there wasn't the slightest inkling or indication that de Klerk was thinking along these lines. He was described to be as a "Verlichte" or "enlightened" Afrikaaner, but certainly when I met with him he not only believed that the president should be an Afrikaaner, but the best interests of South Africa required the maintenance of apartheid. On another occasion, I met with P.W. Botha, who was F.W. de Klerk's predecessor as president. That was one of the most unpleasant encounters I ever had with a head of state. It was funny: the embassy had not been able to set up a meeting for me, but I was traveling with a very good friend of mine, Stephen Shalom, who was very active in Jewish communal activities in the United States. He met there a rabbi from New York who it turned out was very close to P.W. Botha. Mr. Shalom mentioned that I had been unable to see President Botha myself, so the rabbi said, "I'll arrange it" and sure enough, he did. So, I went to see the state president. When we walked into the room, there were dozens of reporters there. So as we posed for pictures before the meeting began, just to make conversation I said that, "It seems, Mr. President, I get more press coverage here than I did back home." He said, "That is why you came, wasn't it?" We didn't start off very well. But inside the meeting, I at one point in the discussion raised the status of Nelson Mandela and asked if it might be possible, after all the years that Mr. Mandela had spent in prison, as a gesture of reconciliation to let him go. He replied by saying that he would let Mandela go when the western powers let that old man in prison in Berlin go, which was, of course, a reference to Rudolf Hess. I said to him, "Mr. President, are you really comparing Nelson Mandela to a convicted Nazi war criminal?" Of course, he was. When I emerged, I had a press conference about an hour later at my hotel. When I was asked how the meeting went, I said that it was like taking a cold shower. There wasn't the slightest indication of flexibility and for him to have compared Mandela to Rudolf Hess indicated how far removed he was from the reality which so many of us perceived both

about Mandela as well as his country.

Q: Looking back at the system for a member of Congress going to a place, you were saying when you first went there the people you were meeting... The embassy had arranged to have you meet with the more enlightened people, which in a way was not overly helpful.

SOLARZ: Well, it resulted in my getting a skewed view and vision of the South African reality. In fairness to the embassy, I would often, as I did whenever I traveled around the world, let the embassy know in advance the names of particular people that I wanted to see. But I would also rely on the embassy to arrange meetings for me with people they thought it was useful for me to meet with, that I might not have either heard about myself or that I hadn't asked them to arrange meetings with. Many of the meetings they set up for me were extremely useful in my getting to know key actors in the South African government as well as in the opposition. But they almost never set up meetings for me with really hardline Afrikaaners. I began to realize that by not speaking to that segment of the society, which in effect was the politically dominant segment of the society, I was coming away with a misleading impression of South Africa's political reality.

Q: I think sometimes this also reflects almost the way we operate. At a certain point, you know where these people, the hardliners, are coming from. The dialogue almost falls down.

SOLARZ: You may know where they're coming from, but by talking to them, you can get a much better feel for the depth of their commitment as well as for the underlying considerations which have led them to the conclusions they're reached, which in turn can then give you a much better feel for what, if anything, will move them in the direction in which you want them to go. For example, until I spent that evening with that group of Afrikaaners in Wombat, I never fully appreciated the extent to which these people genuinely and sincerely believed that the blacks were totally incapable of governing themselves. It was a deeply imbued form of racism. That did give me an insight which I didn't have previously which in turn gave me a better understanding of what needed to be done.

Q: Did you see a change when the Carter administration came in? Did your role change?

SOLARZ: The only real difference in our policy, as I recall it, towards South Africa during the Carter administration compared to the Ford and Nixon administrations is that rhetorically we were somewhat more critical, more outspoken in our condemnation of the regime. I have a recollection that Vice President Mondale at one point gave a speech in which he said that majority rule is inevitable. This raised all sorts of hackles in South Africa on the part of the white regime and its supporters. But even under Carter there was no support on the part of the administration for sanctions or putting any real pressure on South Africa to move in the direction of change. So, I would say the differences from Nixon to Carter were really at the margins and had much more to do with our rhetorical

posture than with our substantive policy. Then, of course, when Reagan came in, the policy changed dramatically in the sense that it was based on this concept of constructive engagement, which in turn was based on the view that the key to change in South Africa, given the vast disproportion of power available to the whites and the blacks, was with the white community, and that the only way to achieve the eventual abolition of apartheid was to curry favor with the white community. To be fair to Reagan and Chet Crocker, his Assistant Secretary for Africa, and the administration, it wasn't as if they were supportive of apartheid, but they felt the only way to bring about change was to win the confidence of the white power structure, and then to use that relationship to induce them to change. But, of course, there were many others, including myself, who felt that constructive engagement not only didn't give us the leverage we were seeking but created the impression on the part of the black majority in South Africa, as well as blacks throughout the rest of the continent, that we were, in fact, sympathetic to the apartheid regime, and were quite comfortable with having it remain in power indefinitely. So, I thought that was entirely counterproductive. It was really the backlash to the policy of constructive engagement, the sense of shame it produced on the part of many Americans that didn't like having our country identified with the apartheid regime, that provided the major impetus in my trying to impose sanctions against South Africa.

Q: Could you talk about when the Reagan administration came in and your relations with Chet Crocker and all right at the beginning?

SOLARZ: There is actually a very interesting story there. In July of 1980, I went to South Africa for about a week. It was my longest trip there.

Q: This was about five months prior to the election when Reagan came in.

SOLARZ: Right. When I was there, I arranged one evening to spend a night in Soweto. Technically, it was prohibited. If you were white, you weren't permitted to stay there. But I stayed at the home of Leonard Masala, who was a member of the Committee of Ten, which was sort of the informal black leadership in Soweto. The next morning, I got up and went outside. It looked like a very cloudy day. There was a huge haze in the sky, which I subsequently realized was produced by all the cooking fires outside. I remember, after we left Soweto to go to Johannesburg, as we reached the outskirts of Soweto, I noticed two things. First, there was a huge power plant there, which could have provided electricity to Soweto, but was geared to provide all of its electricity to Johannesburg, where the whites were. As a consequence of this, it wasn't until I got out of Soweto that I realized it was a beautiful, sunny day. But the people in Soweto had been, in effect, deprived as a result of the apartheid system of the ability to see the sun. It was an incredible metaphor. In any case, when I was picked up that morning, there was a young black man of about 19 who worked for our consulate in Johannesburg who came in the group to pick me up. We were talking outside Masala's home. He said to me, "You know, I would really like to go to college in the States, but I can't afford it and you don't seem to have any program to make it possible for people like me to go to a university in your country. Why don't you establish such a program?" I thought it was a terrific idea. In all my visits to South Africa, that was the one genuinely creative policy suggestion that I

heard from anybody associated with the U.S. mission there. So, I proceeded to ask everybody I met in South Africa from “Verlichte” Afrikaaners to black urban activists what they thought of this idea. It turned out that without exception, everyone thought it was a great idea. They recognized that whether you were for apartheid or against it, whether you thought it was there forever or you thought it was going to go, they needed some educated blacks. Of course, from my point of view, I thought eventually apartheid would go and when that day came, there would be a greater need than ever for educated professional blacks, and I thought that if our country could play a role in educating them, it might not only prepare the country for the transition but generate a residue of goodwill for the U.S. as well.

In any case, I came back and decided to push it. Reagan was elected. Crocker was selected as Assistant Secretary for Africa. He had written a seminal piece in "Foreign Affairs" magazine on constructive engagement in which he had laid out the proposition that the best way for us to influence the future course of events was by having a positive policy towards South Africa rather than a harsh one. So, I asked him to come to my office. I said to him that it seemed to me that this idea of a scholarship program for South African blacks to study in the United States to acquire the education and the skills that they couldn't acquire in a segregated education system in South Africa was very much along the lines of what he seemed to be advocating, a policy of constructive engagement. I expressed the hope that he would embrace this idea as an administration initiative. It was obvious it would cost money. I knew that it would have a much better chance of being adopted if the administration was for it than if the administration opposed it.

Somewhat to my chagrin, however, he not only refused to accept the idea but decided to fight it, which he did literally every step of the way. I got it adopted in the House. It was a \$10 million authorization for two years to provide 100 scholarships of roughly \$10,000 a scholarship. It went to conference with the Senate. When it was in conference, he persuaded Nancy Kassebaum to oppose it. It turned out the key vote in the conference committee was Senator Percy of Illinois, who was the chairman at the time of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I contacted Jesse Jackson, who had his political base in Chicago, and Jackson undertook to speak to Percy, who to his credit decided to support the House position. With his support, it became law. About a year later, Larry Eagleburger, who was then deputy secretary of State, gave a speech on constructive engagement in which he cited the South African Scholarship Program as the jewel in the crown of the constructive engagement policy. I called Eagleburger up. I knew him personally and had a lot of respect and affection for him. I said, "Larry, I don't know if you know this, but you just gave this speech and you pointed to the South African Scholarship Program as the major achievement of the policy of constructive engagement. The fact of the matter is that this was a congressional initiative which was opposed to the bitter end by the administration. I don't mind the fact that you didn't give me the credit for it, but I think it's outrageous that you claim credit for it for an administration which did everything it could to scuttle the thing."

One postscript on this. A couple of years ago, Princeton Lyman, who was our ambassador to South Africa, told me that they had a dinner to celebrate the 10th

anniversary of the Scholarship Program in South Africa. Bishop Tutu had been named head of the committee which made the selections of who was going to get the scholarship. He said they had 1,500 recipients there. 98% of them have gone back to South Africa after getting their education in the U.S. These are people who are teachers, accountants, government administrators, etc. The program has been a spectacular success. It is truly one of the best things we've done for South Africa. That is sort of how it got underway.

Q: I would think this was like motherhood on the part of the administration. What was behind Crocker's opposition and vehement opposition?

SOLARZ: You would probably have to ask him. It may be that it had to do primarily with the fact that I came up with the idea rather than him. But the arguments he used was that if we were going to do something like this, we should be spending the money in South Africa to educate blacks there. But the answer to that argument was that if we spent our money on education of blacks in South Africa, we would be reinforcing an apartheid system. The blacks couldn't go to the white universities. That would have been utterly unacceptable both morally and politically to the Congress.

Q: We've been down this road in the United States before. We had segregation and we've repudiated it. Was the chemistry bad between you and Crocker?

SOLARZ: I think it became bad after a while, but to my knowledge it didn't start out that way. I basically didn't know Crocker until he became assistant secretary. I believe the first time I met him - at least that I can recall - was after Reagan was elected and he became the assistant secretary for Africa and I asked him to meet with him in my office so I could present this idea to him. To my chagrin, he not only rejected the idea but then went on, as I indicated, to oppose it. Then, of course, I became one of the more vocal opponents of the policy of constructive engagement, by no means the only one - but I was one of the most prominent. By that time, I was no longer chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, although I remained actively involved in the effort to impose sanctions against South Africa and to get initiatives like this adopted. But why he didn't embrace it, I have to say I didn't understand then and don't understand now.

Q: While you were chairman of the Committee, but then also even afterwards, could we talk about the sanctions and your perception and role in the sanctions?

SOLARZ: I first introduced legislation which would have required American firms to comply with the Sullivan principles, which had been promulgated by the Reverend Leon Sullivan of Philadelphia, which in effect were a set of personnel guidelines which American corporations were supposed to voluntarily embrace precluding discrimination in the workplace. But unfortunately most American firms had not voluntarily embraced the Sullivan guidelines. I started out by trying to get that adopted legislatively, which they were. Then I believe I was the first one to introduce sanctions legislation against South Africa, but for many years that languished without any real support. Then the combination of the backlash to the policy of constructive engagement combined with

additional uprisings and atrocities within South Africa created much more support for it. We eventually got it adopted in 1986. But I have to say that I never thought that the imposition of sanctions would bring the government of South Africa to its knees and certainly not in the short-run. I thought this was very much of a long-term proposition, but I felt that it was essential in terms of longer-range American interests for the black majority, which eventually in my view was destined to come to power, to feel that the United States had been on the side of change rather than on the side of the status quo and that one way of doing this was to impose sanctions against the regime.

Q: What was your feeling about sanctions in general and within Congress? Often, one has the feeling that we end up with sanctions and it's "Don't stand there. Do something." Often, sanctions really don't... At least it's very disputable whether they work or not.

SOLARZ: Very often, sanctions don't work, but there have been occasions when they have. I think South Africa was clearly one of them, although I have to say that it worked much more effectively than I anticipated at the time. I thought the struggle for change in South Africa was a long-term, not a near-term or even a medium-term, proposition. But I felt first that to the extent change did come about in South Africa, to the extent that apartheid was abolished, it would inevitable require a combination of internal and external pressure. I felt that sanctions had a role to play in ratcheting up the external pressure.

I also felt that since change was inevitable in South Africa, it was very much in the interests of the United States to make it clear that we were on the side of those seeking the abolition of apartheid rather than its perpetuation. Particularly given the policy of constructive engagement, which had created the impression that we were sympathetic to apartheid at best and supportive of it at worst, the imposition of sanctions was essential if we were going to have any hope of convincing the indigenous majority of South Africa and people elsewhere on the continent, and around the world, that we really were opposed to the apartheid regime.

Q: I served in INR back in the late '50s in African Affairs. I had the Horn of Africa. Most of us felt at that time, yes, apartheid would go and there would be a "Night of Long Knives" and the whites would be the recipients. What was the attitude when we're talking about the late '70s and into the '80s?

SOLARZ: This was clearly a concern on the part of some people here. There is no question that it was one of the underlying anxieties which was one of the major political props underlying the apartheid regime. The whites in South Africa had been there for 300 years and felt very legitimately that this was their country, too, and they basically had nowhere else to go. They were convinced that if they relinquished power, there would be chaos at best and a bloodbath at worst and the whole country would go down the tubes and their culture would be exterminated. So, they were trying to preserve what they had.

But I felt that while one could not preclude such a possibility given what had happened elsewhere in Africa, there was a very real possibility that it wouldn't happen in South

Africa, for a whole variety of reasons. One of them was that I was struck in my visits there by the fact that in spite of everything, in spite of all of the suffering, in spite of all of the degradation, in spite of all the discrimination, there was remarkably little hatred on the part of the blacks for the whites. You may remember that great line in Allen Patton's Cry the Beloved Country where one of the characters says, "My great fear is that by the time the whites turn to loving, the blacks will have turned to hating." But that day had not yet come in South Africa.

Secondly, I was impressed by the calibre of many of the black leaders whom I met who struck me as being exceptionally intelligent, with deep commitment to a kind of political decency, and I felt that if interracial harmony could exist anywhere in Africa, South Africa was the place where it had a real chance to take root. Finally, I felt that by not abolishing the apartheid system sooner rather than later, one would be maximizing the prospects of the very worst case scenario which was being put forth as one of the primary justifications for maintaining the apartheid system.

Q: Were you getting any feel for the calibre of Nelson Mandela, who became crucial? He had been in jail ever since you had been on the scene.

SOLARZ: I should have said this was one of the other reasons why I had hope for the future. I never met Mandela before he was released. He was in prison. I had asked to meet with him but was never given permission to do so. But I was able to speak and to get to know some people in South Africa who did have contact with Mandela, like Helen Suzman, whom I adored, and for whom I have the greatest respect and affection, and also someone like Benjamin Pogrund, the editor of The Rand Daily Mail. I was very much impressed by the fact that both of them spoke very highly of Mandela, felt that he was a man of reconciliation, a towering figure. In fact, their descriptions of Mandela turned out to be amazingly accurate, given what we all know about Mandela now that he's been released. So, I felt that in a certain sense the release of Mandela was a very important element to a peaceful future for South Africa. I felt that he was someone who had both the stature with the black community and the personal inclination to seek a measure of reconciliation between the races that would make a truly nonracial South Africa possible. So, basically, while I never met him, I did feel that he was very much a part of the solution rather than the problem. My one contact with Mandela before he was released was, when I was called by Ben Pogrund, who had been in touch with Mandela.

Q: This was about when?

SOLARZ: This was in the mid-'80s. Mandela had told him he wanted his daughter to get an education in the States, but of course, they had no money. Pogrund, whom I got to know, for whom I have a lot of respect, asked me if there was anything I could do. To make a long story short, I got in touch with Joe Duffy, who is now the head of USIA, but who at the time was president of the University of Massachusetts, and told him about Mandela's daughter. He arranged to have her get a full scholarship to UMASS, where she eventually got her degree and graduated.

Q: While you were working on the sanctions business, I assume you must have had a lot of pressure saying, "Well, this is all very good, but the United States unilaterally declares this, this means you're wiping us out of South Africa. Other firms will take over" or "After all, our firms are not dealing in apartheid and therefore you're cutting out jobs for black Africans."

SOLARZ: There were obviously arguments to that effect which were being made. I certainly believed that the effectiveness of sanctions was very much contingent on others going along. I generally shared the view that in order for sanctions to have any real hope of being effective, they have to be multilateral rather than unilateral. In this case, however, I felt that it was essential for the United States to take the lead because without a willingness on our part to go first there was no hope that others would follow and if we did go first there was a reasonable possibility that the Commonwealth and others would go along. That is what turned out to be the case.

Also, the sanctions did not prohibit any and all economic relations between the U.S. and South Africa. It did prohibit the importation of certain items from South Africa. It prohibited investment. But it didn't prohibit trade and existing firms that were there were permitted to stay if they chose to do so.

Q: How did this play out in the time you were in Congress? What were you getting from the Reagan administration and the State Department as you moved ahead on the sanctions?

SOLARZ: The administration was totally opposed to the sanctions. When they were passed by Congress, Reagan vetoed them and the sanctions were then adopted over his opposition. There was one interesting political and parliamentary drama on the floor of the House. The Foreign Affairs Committee had reported out a moderate sanctions bill. Ron Dellums had offered an amendment to the bill which imposed a total ban which was not only a ban on new investment but which required the disinvestment of existing investments. There were very few members on the floor at the time that it came up for a vote. The chair at the time called for the "yeas" and "nays" and ruled that the "ayes" had it. At that point, the minority manager of the bill was in a position to call for a record vote. There is no doubt that if he had called for a record vote, it would have been defeated. But he calculated that by permitting Dellum's amendment to be incorporated in the bill, thereby making it a much more radical bill (because now it went way beyond prohibiting new investment), but required disinvestment, that it would discredit the whole bill and the whole bill would be defeated. But in fact, the bill was adopted. Members didn't want to cast a vote that might be portrayed as making them look like they were sympathetic to apartheid. So, the fact that a disinvestment bill passed the House generated real momentum in the Senate and made the position of those advocating a more moderate form of sanctions look much more responsible. So, that facilitated the adoption of the legislation in the Senate. Then ultimately the House accepted the Senate position. So, I think there is a very good chance that if the minority managers of the bill had not made that tactical error, the sanctions would not have been adopted.

Q: How about other countries? Through your connections, were you able to see pressure put on other countries to come along with us?

SOLARZ: I don't think anyone from the U.S. was putting pressure on other countries. The administration certainly wasn't. It was opposed to sanctions by the U.S. But I think the example of what the U.S. did generated internal pressures in these countries. This had become a major source of global concern in the '80s. In many of the commonwealth countries, for instance, there were political parties or movements that were offended by apartheid and who when they saw the U.S. moving to impose sanctions felt emboldened to do so as well. This generated a source of internal pressure in countries like Australia, New Zealand, and even the UK which governments had to respond to.

Q: When Mandela was released, were you in Congress?

SOLARZ: Yes. I didn't leave until 1992.

Q: Did you get involved in any of that or was there much to get involved in?

SOLARZ: I met with P.W. Botha, who was the state president. I urged him without much effect to release Mandela. I have a recollection we also adopted a resolution calling for Mandela's release. Certainly I spoke about it with South Africans. But I don't think that my efforts had much to do with the decision on the part of the South African government to release him.

Q: But the sanctions momentum did help.

SOLARZ: I have no doubt that sanctions were an important contributing factor to the recognition on the part of F.W. de Klerk that the apartheid system was a non-starter. It was rather a doomed endeavor in that the long-term interests of the white community and of the country of the whole would be better served by moving to abolish apartheid and to making a deal with Mandela than by perpetuating the system. I think it demonstrated that their hopes for international sympathy and support, were at the end of the day, without foundation. Therefore, basically, their only real alternative was to come to terms with the black majority.

Q: Let's turn from South Africa to Zimbabwe. Could you talk about your experiences and dealings on that issue? We're talking about what was old Southern Rhodesia and white rule there.

SOLARZ: As I had indicated, in 1976, I met Mugabe in a place on the Mozambican coast called Kilimanay, which I flew to in a chartered plane. I believe I was the first official American to ever meet with Mugabe. He had spent more than a decade in Ian Smith's prisons. He was the leader of Zanu. This was the more significant of the two Zimbabwean liberation movements. The other was Zapu. The reason Zanu was more significant was that it was the movement of the Shona people, who constituted 80% of the population. Zapu, led by Joshua Nkomo, had its base with the Ndebele, who were

20% of the population.

My first policy involvement really came at the time that Smith moved for what was known at the time as an internal settlement in which he negotiated the transition to majority rule with Bishop Muzorewa, who was a Zimbabwean native, a black, who reached an agreement with Smith to have elections in which the blacks could participate to elect a majority-rule government. On the surface, it seemed like a very significant step forward, but for a variety of reasons, the agreement was rejected by the Patriotic Front. I felt very strongly that without the participation of the Patriotic Front, the internal settlement was doomed to failure and that it wouldn't lead to an end to the war and that it was not under those circumstances really possible to have a genuinely free and fair election. The issue came up in a congressional context because there was a resolution that was brought up to call for an American delegation to observe the elections. A similar resolution had passed in the Senate. I felt this would be a mistake. My sense was that if the delegation went, they would look at the voting and probably on election day it would be reasonably honest. They would give the elections a good government seal of approval and then we would be in a position where we had, in effect, legitimized the process which was inherently unfair, given the extent to which it did not include a movement which I had reason to believe, based on my travels there, had really won the allegiance of the great majority of the people. In a very close vote, those of us who opposed the dispatch of observers were able to prevail and the resolution was defeated. Then, prior to that, the Congress had adopted the Case-Javits Amendment, which provided the U.S., which had imposed sanctions on Rhodesia after the unilateral declaration of independence by Ian Smith, would lift sanctions if the President determined that the elections that had been called were free and fair. After the elections were held, Carter had to decide what to do. He called a meeting in the White House to which he invited those members of the House who had been most active on this issue. Most of the members present said that as a practical matter he had to certify the elections were free and fair because if he didn't the Congress would overturn his negative certification and lift sanctions anyway. I remember, I argued, backed up by Bill Gray (from Pennsylvania; a member of the Black Caucus), who was there, and also Cardis Collins, that while I thought it would be difficult, that I believed that at the end of the day the House would be prepared to sustain his determination if he concluded the elections were not free and fair. Carter to his credit ultimately came to the conclusion the elections were not free and fair. In fact, the Congress did sustain his determination.

But then there were efforts to lift sanctions in spite of Carter's determination. It wasn't easy to stop this. I was able to hammer out an agreement with Paul Findlay, a Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee from Illinois, who had been very vocal in calling for the lifting of sanctions now that an election had been held in which blacks had been able to participate and was supposedly going to have a black prime minister, Mr. Muzorewa. I was able to work out an agreement with him putting off the lifting of sanctions until December 15. The reason we picked that date was that after the internal settlement elections, the British decided to give one last chance for the effort to get a negotiated settlement, including all of the actors in the Rhodesian drama, including the Patriotic Front. They were about to begin negotiations at Lancaster House. My view was that if we

lifted sanctions prior to the Lancaster House negotiations, it would kill any chance of an overall settlement. Under those circumstances, Smith and Muzorewa would conclude that time was on their side. If the United States lifted sanctions, other countries would follow and they would have no reason to reach an agreement with the Patriotic Front.

The consequence, of course, of that approach would have been the indefinite continuation of the war and an enormous loss of life and the further destabilization of southern Africa.

By getting Findlay to agree with me, I was able to get this legislation adopted unanimously by the Foreign Affairs Committee, which actually was a rather extraordinary legislative achievement. This was a very polarizing issue. You had a lot of members of Congress - Senator Helms, Senator Byrd of Virginia, and others - demanding that sanctions be lifted immediately. But here we succeeded not only in putting off the lifting of sanctions by three or four months but had done it with a unanimous vote. The fact that it came out of the committee unanimously meant that when it came up on the floor, even though by that time some of the Republicans on the committee, including the ranking member, Mr. Bloomfield of Michigan, had second thoughts and decided to oppose the legislation on the grounds that they wanted sanctions lifted right away rather than a few months later meant that the legislation was adopted by a very comfortable margin. I believe that history will record that that legislation played a very important role in making it possible for Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Minister at Lancaster House to succeed in hammering out an agreement which made it possible to end the fighting and which led to new elections in Zimbabwe in which the Patriotic Front won an overwhelming majority of the vote, which in turn confirmed what I had felt all along, which was that the first elections in which blacks could participate but in which the Patriotic Front did not field candidates was inherently flawed.

Q: That is very interesting. As you were dealing with Sub-Saharan Africa, what was your attitude towards the fact that so many of the governments there, which were really one party, not very democratic governments in black Africa... Did that cause you concern as far as the two places where we were particularly engaged, Zimbabwe and South Africa?

SOLARZ: In South Africa, what primarily concerned me was the continuation of white minority rule in the country. I favored replacing white minority rule with black majority rule, but I didn't want to substitute a black tyranny for a white tyranny. I thought that democracy was important for the future of the country, but you didn't get to democracy until you first got rid of white minority rule. In fact, you've had multiparty systems in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, although the liberation movements emerged after minority rule was abolished as the dominant political parties, but not the only ones. There were opposition political parties in both countries.

Q: Were there any other areas of Africa that particularly seized your attention during this time?

SOLARZ: Yes. Zaire was one. I felt that the Mobutu regime was a hopelessly corrupt government which had despoiled the country and which had produced a standard of

living that was, if anything, below what it was at the time Belgium left. I was very much involved there in an effort to try to bring about a change. I considered the fact that by the time I left Congress, Mobutu was still in and I was gone, to be one of my major failures. He was clearly one of the leading kleptocrats in the world.

On one my early trips to Zaire, I came across massive corruption in the PL 480 Title I rice program in which we were providing rice at concessionary prices to the government of Zaire, but instead of selling it to their own people, they were selling most of it across the river in Congo Brazzaville for forty times what we sold it to them. So, the money was going into the pockets of Mobutu and his cronies and I somewhat naively thought that once this information was brought to my colleagues in the Congress, they would support my efforts to eliminate the program. I thought I was being very moderate and restrained when calling not for the elimination of our entire Title I program in Zaire, but just the rice program. But I had never encountered before the political power of the farm lobby. What I discovered was that in the farm lobby each commodity - rice, corn, wheat, etc. - supports the other commodities, so they all band together. The rice people obviously didn't want the rice-

Q: This was Senator Ellender and company.

SOLARZ: Right. It never got to the Senate, but the amendment came up on the floor of the House and it was soundly defeated. I have to say, I was amazed. I couldn't believe that members of Congress would vote to continue a program that was demonstrably corrupt. The agricultural lobby was far more powerful than I ever anticipated.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point?

SOLARZ: One of the first amendments I ever got adopted as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee was an amendment that prohibited military assistance to Ethiopia after the overthrow of the Emperor and the establishment of the Red Terror in Addis Ababa by the Mengistu regime. They were killing all sorts of people in the streets. I was involved there.

I also had an interesting experience in '79 or '80. I went to Liberia, where I met President Tolbert and Foreign Minister Dennis and Tolbert's son. Within six months of my visit there, all of these people had been executed by the rebels who took power led by Sergeant Samuel Mo. President Reagan called him "President Mo" on the White House lawn. That was a bit of a shock, to have all these people I met suddenly blown away.

Of course, I was very much involved in the issue of the Western Sahara, but that is not sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps we could save that for the next time.

Q: Today is June 23, 1997. In the last session, we covered Africa below the Sahara. We want to pick up about the Polisario, Morocco, and all that. Could you tell me about your

involvement in the Moroccan Polisario business?

SOLARZ: I was chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa at the time. I became interested in the issue since it seemed to be one of the major unresolved issues of colonialism in Africa. So, I decided to go out to the area with a view toward getting a better understanding of the issue. It turned out that it was a very well-timed trip.

Q: This was when?

SOLARZ: I believe this was in 1979. I arrived in North Africa at precisely the moment when Mauritania decided to withdraw from its portion of the Western Sahara, which was called the Tiras al Harbia. The Western Sahara, when Spain left in 1975 or 1974, was divided between Morocco, which claimed 2/3 of it, and Mauritania, which claimed the other 1/3, and of course the Polisario, which claimed to represent the indigenous Saharan people, claimed all of it. In any case, when Mauritania withdrew from its part of the Western Sahara, the Moroccans immediately moved to occupy the entire Western Sahara. So, I went to Algeria, where I met the leaders of the Algerian government. They flew me to Tindouf, where I met with the Polisario and spent the evening with them and witnessed a sort of gathering of 10,000 Saharwi tribesmen that evening, which I was asked to address. Then I also went to Morocco, where I saw the King and where the Moroccans flew me to El Aiun, which was the regional capital of the Tiras al Harbia that they had just taken over. They flew me there essentially to demonstrate that their action in taking control of the Tiras al Harbia met with the support of the indigenous population. When I got out of the plane, there were about 1,000 of what appeared to be Saharwi tribesmen waiting for me. I emerged from the plane and walked into town, the airport being just on the outskirts, and went up onto the second floor balcony of the building there and then addressed the tribesmen below. Through an interpreter, I introduced myself and asked them, "How many of you are in favor of Morocco?" A thousand hands went up and everybody cheered and I said, "How many of you are in favor of the Polisario" and they booed and jeered. But when I subsequently went on to Mauritania to speak to the Mauritians, I was told that before I arrived in El Aiun, the Moroccans had flown in these people to demonstrate and to pretend they were the indigenous population. At the time, the OAU [Organization of African Unity] had called for some kind of referendum or plebiscite in which the people of the Western Sahara could determine whether they wanted to be independent or to be affiliated with Morocco. But the Moroccans were rejecting this demand. After Spain withdrew, the King organized the so-called "Green March" in which tens of thousands of Moroccans marched into the Western Sahara to claim it for Morocco. That in turn led to an insurrection which was gathering some momentum at the time.

To make a long story short, I felt that the Moroccans were being unreasonable and that the most equitable solution to the problem was through some form of internationally supervised plebiscite in which the people of the Western Sahara could determine their own destiny. I wrote an article to that effect for Foreign Affairs.

Somewhat to my surprise, because I hadn't appreciated the extent to which there was a

kind of de facto Moroccan lobby in the United States, the Jewish community, which was very sympathetic to the Moroccan perspective primarily because there was a Jewish community of about 20,000 people in Morocco and they had enjoyed very good relations with the King and it was an Arab country where the Jewish minority was reasonably well treated, the Jewish community here really came down on me like a ton of bricks. I was stunned. I must confess that I had been unaware of the extent to which Morocco enjoyed such strong support in the Jewish community. I tried without much success to persuade some of my friends in the Jewish community that Morocco had sent a brigade to the Middle East during the 1973 war (even they it only got there after the fighting ended) and that King Hassan was the chairman of the al-Kuds Committee, which is the Arabic name for Jerusalem, of the Arab League, but those arguments didn't seem to carry much weight. So, it actually was somewhat painful politically. The Jewish community, which basically was very supportive of me because I was considered a good friend of Israel, was now being quite critical.

In any case, as time went on, Morocco changed its position. The King eventually came out in favor of a referendum. One still hasn't been held because Morocco had been with unable to reach an agreement with the Polisario over who would be entitled to vote in the referendum. There was a Spanish census in 1974 in which they found 74,500 Saharwi and both sides agreed that that census was supposed to be the basis for determining who was eligible, but I gather that the Moroccans are claiming that there are tens of thousands who weren't counted in the census who should be entitled to vote.

In the meantime, the Moroccans also developed a new tactic. They built some huge berm which went for hundreds of miles along the desert, which apparently made it very difficult for the Polisario to get into the Western Sahara to conduct their guerrilla attacks. So, for the moment, the situation is still stalemated. My impression is that the insurrection is still relatively ineffectual yet they haven't been able to reach an agreement on how to actually conduct a plebiscite. I gather that former Secretary of State Baker has recently been appointed by Secretary General Kofi Annan to mediate the dispute.

Q: In Congress, was there also an anti-Moroccan, pro-Polisario group within the staff or within members of Congress?

SOLARZ: The issue of the Western Sahara was not exactly a front burner issue in the Congress. I think probably the majority of the members were not even aware that there was an issue here. To the extent that people were, I think Morocco enjoyed reasonable strong support. First of all, the Jewish community spoke out very strongly in its favor. Secondly, Morocco was considered one of the more moderate Arab countries. It had been helpful to the United States in a number of respects. So, outside of a relatively limited number of the more liberal Democrats who were sensitive to issues of self-determination, and anti-colonialism, I don't think that there was broadbased support in Congress for a pro-Polisario position. I didn't view my own position to be one which favored an independent Saharwi state. I thought that there ought to be a mechanism for determining how the people in the Western Sahara felt.

Q: You said you were not pushing for an independent state for the Polisario, which was 75,000 or whatever. It doesn't seem like a very viable...

SOLARZ: I think there are some members of the UN [United Nations] that have even smaller populations than the Democratic People's Republic of Sahara would have had. The OAU had recognized the Polisario as a member of the organization, so in that sense it had a certain degree of international legitimacy. In fact, the position I advocated was ultimately vindicated in the sense that both the Polisario and Morocco agreed to the principle of a plebiscite although they have yet to agree on the basis for conducting the plebiscite.

Q: Were the Algerians involved in this? Did they have a stake in this?

SOLARZ: The Algerians were deeply involved in the conflict. They had some differences with Morocco. They were strongly committed to the Polisario cause. The Polisario was based in Algerian territory from which they would launch their raids into Morocco. The Algerians strongly supported the principle of a plebiscite, which seemed to me to be the most equitable and reasonable way of resolving the issue.

Q: What were American interests in the area?

SOLARZ: We had an interest in facilitating a resolution of a conflict between Morocco and Algeria which conceivably could lead to a war between them. We had a humanitarian interest in facilitating an end to the conflict in the Western Sahara. I thought we had a larger interest in terms of Africa as a whole in demonstrating to African countries that we were not insensitive to their concerns for the equitable liquidation of the remaining manifestations of European colonialism on the continent. So, for all those reasons, I thought that we should encourage a political settlement of the conflict based on a plebiscite to enable the residents there to determine their own destiny.

Q: Was this equated when you were pushing this, advocating this, to say, "Alright, what about in the West Bank or move it over to the Israeli thing?" You have a large group of Palestinians who were not being allowed to (We're talking about back in in the late '70s.) their own state.

SOLARZ: I don't recall that that was a major point that was made in the debate. Certainly, the Moroccans were not going to make the argument along those lines because they were in favor of self-determination for the Palestinians. My own view was and still is that self-determination is a general principle which is not applicable in every situation. Not every people in the world are entitled to self-determination or are capable of sustaining it. But in the case of the Western Sahara, I felt that the claims of Morocco were sufficiently dubious so that it was not by itself sufficient to merit the support of the United States, in particularly given the feelings of the OAU and most of the other countries in Africa and the fact that Morocco didn't seem to be in a position to win the war militarily, holding a plebiscite seemed to be the most effective way of resolving the issue.

Q: We have not covered in the Middle East the 1977-1981 Carter period dealing with Camp David. Did you from the congressional point of view get involved in the Camp David process?

SOLARZ: Not really, except insofar as I spoke up in favor of the administration's diplomacy and strongly supported the Camp David Agreement. I also remember visiting the Middle East in the wake of Camp David and urging Palestinians with whom I met as well as Jordanians and other Arabs to accept Camp David as a significant step forward and as a means for facilitating the resolution of the Palestinian problem. Indeed, the Oslo Agreement many years later was in essence an effort to carry forward the mechanisms established at Camp David for a solution to the Palestinian problem which involved an incremental process in which first there would be the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian authority in the West Bank and Gaza which would then be followed by negotiations on final status. It was the step by step or incremental approach embodied at Camp David which was ultimately accepted by the Palestinians, albeit many years later. My own view is that if the Palestinians and particularly the Arabs in general had been willing to embrace the opportunity afforded by Camp David to begin the process of addressing the Palestinian problem, the chances are that by now the Palestinians would have had a state already.

Q: During the Camp David process in Congress, what was the attitude

SOLARZ: I think there was enormous enthusiasm. People saw this as a dazzling diplomatic achievement. President Carter had put his prestige on the line. It was a little bit like hitting a grand slam home run in the bottom of the ninth in the seventh game of the World Series when we're down by three runs. We were all tremendously excited. I remember being at the White House when they announced the agreement. We, of course, committed ourselves in the context of Camp David to providing substantial levels of aid for Israel and Egypt and that required congressional action which I strongly supported.

Q: Was there any particular opposition to the aid portion?

SOLARZ: Very little. I think most members recognized that this was a very significant agreement and that it very much served American interests, but that the implementation of the agreement required the United States to make available resources to Israel, for example, to relocate a military air base that had been built in Sinai and to otherwise make arrangements to enhance its security given the strategic sacrifice it was making by relinquishing the Sinai Peninsula and also to reward Egypt for its willingness to break ranks with other Arab countries and to enter into a peace treaty with Israel. I think there was a recognition that if we weren't prepared to reward Israel and Egypt for their courage in signing this agreement, it could undermine the agreement itself. Insofar as Egypt's withdrawal from the Arab front against Israel, it significantly diminished the possibility of another war in the Middle East (The Arabs presumably would be less willing to go to war without the participation of Egypt), it very much served the national interests of the United States.

Q: Did you talk to King Hussein during the aftermath of Camp David?

SOLARZ: Yes. I went to Jordan after Camp David. I believe I met with the King. In any case, I certainly met with Jordanian leaders. I have been to Jordan so many times over the years and met the King several times, so it's hard for me to recall offhand on which trips I met him. But when I was there, I argued with them that they should support Camp David because this represented the best chance for the solution of the Palestinian problem and that given the differences between the Arabs and Israel over what should ultimately be done with the West Bank and Gaza and with Jerusalem, it was unrealistic to think that it could be solved all at once within the framework of a comprehensive settlement, and that the best chance for solving the problem was a step by step approach in which agreement could be reached on lesser issues, thereby generating the kind of confidence which might make it possible to resolve the more complex issues which would have to be resolved in final status talks.

Q: What sort of reaction were you getting from the Jordanians?

SOLARZ: I think the reaction I got in Jordan was pretty much the same as the reaction I got elsewhere in the Arab world, that Camp David represented the betrayal of Arab interests, that Egypt had settled for a separate peace, that the underlying problem, which was the Palestinian issue, was not resolved, and that therefore from their perspective this was a step backwards rather than a step forward.

Q: In the same area, three issues were all intertwined: AWACS (an airborne early warning radar system, a rather complicated air control system mounted in an airplane), the F-15s (a fighter plane) going to Saudi Arabia, and Hawk missiles to Jordan. How did these play out during this time?

SOLARZ: In those years, Congress had asserted the right to play a role in determining whether sophisticated American arms could be sold abroad by giving itself in effect a veto over such arms sales through the enactment of a resolution of disapproval. That was subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in a later case involving congressional vetoes. But at the time, it was the law of the land. So, when the administration wanted to sell Hawk missiles to Jordan or F-15s and AWACS to Saudi Arabia, they had to deal with the Congress on the issue. At the time, I felt that these weapons systems could potentially upset the military balance of the region and opposed them.

Q: Was there any problem about the fact that if we didn't sell them this meant that the French or the British would be supplying the equivalent and this would also mean money going out of the hands of Americans and into the hands of the French or the British?

SOLARZ: This was an argument which was advanced by those who favored the sale. There was a good deal of merit to the argument. Those who were opposed to the sale contended that the alternative systems were not as effective as the American systems so that even if the Arabs did acquire the alternative equipment, it wouldn't pose as much of

a threat to Israel as the more sophisticated American equipment would have.

Q: During the Carter period, did you have much to do with Patt Derian, who was the assistant secretary for Human Rights?

SOLARZ: I had some limited contact with her, but certainly nothing approaching any day to day communication.

Q: When did you move over the Pacific side?

SOLARZ: I served as chairman of the African Subcommittee in 1979 and 1980. After the 1980 election, Lester Wolf, who had been chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and Pacific Affairs, was defeated. This opened up the chairmanship of that subcommittee. Given the workings of the seniority system, it put me in a position to move over to the chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs if I chose to do so. I actually gave it a lot of thought. I had very much enjoyed my two years as chairman of the African Subcommittee. I had gotten deeply involved in issues like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Namibia, the Western Sahara, the Sudan, and Zaire. The issues with which I dealt there were issues I felt had not only a strategic but also a moral significance. At the end of the day, however, I decided to move over to the Asian Subcommittee for two reasons, first because I found that I had reached a point in dealing with these African issues where I knew what my interlocutors were going to say before they said it. So, I felt that by the end of the two years, I really wasn't learning anything new. But perhaps more importantly, I felt that from a strategic perspective, the issues that we faced in Asia were simply by an order of magnitude far more important to the country than the issues we faced in Africa. So I decided, after consulting with a number of people, to opt for the chairmanship of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.

Q: You held this from 1981?

SOLARZ: To 1992, twelve years.

Q: When you took over in 1981, what did you feel was the top priority concern at that point in the Asia-Pacific relationship?

SOLARZ: There was no shortage of issues. There was, for example, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and the extent to which that posed a significant strategic threat to American interests in the subcontinent.

Q: Pakistan would fall within the Asia-Pacific?

SOLARZ: Right. So, we had jurisdiction over our policy toward Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. There was the whole issue of what to do about Cambodia given the Vietnamese invasion of that country at the end of 1978. There was the struggle for human rights and democracy in the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan. There were the continuing problems which had to be dealt with in the relationship between the United

States and Japan. There were the issues generated by the normalization of our relationship with China. So, there was no shortage of important issues that came before the subcommittee at that time.

Q: Maybe we might just take each one up. On the Afghanistan situation, by the time you were there, it had been about a year and a half or so from the Soviet invasion in '79. What was the feeling of what we could do?

SOLARZ: The most important thing we could do was to support the Mujaheddin, which we did, and to support Pakistan in the efforts to provide refuge for up to three million Afghan refugees. My feeling was that in terms of containing the Soviet Union, it was essential to make the Soviets pay as heavy a price as possible for their occupation of Afghanistan in order to discourage them from seeking to extend their influence through the use of military means in other places in the future. I think that our efforts to help the Mujaheddin militarily and otherwise were very effective in that regard.

Q: We're talking about 1981. The Reagan administration came in, which in many ways philosophically couldn't have been farther away from where you were coming from. How comfortable were you with the Reagan leadership?

SOLARZ: There were many issues on which I disagreed with the Reagan administration but there were other issues where I did agree. Afghanistan was one of them. I strongly supported the efforts on the part of the Reagan administration to provide assistance to the Mujaheddin and I supported a substantial aid package to Pakistan. I did not support the sale of F-16s to Pakistan because I felt that that was not necessary to enable the Pakistanis to defend themselves against the Soviet Union, but that it would pose a potential threat to India, and that it would also prejudice the prospects for a better Indo-American relationship. But in terms of the economic package for Pakistan, I was very supportive. Actually, one of the things that I was quite proud of and pleased with was the extent to which, during the years I served as chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, I think we were able to foster and facilitate a genuinely bipartisan approach to the foreign policy challenges we faced in that part of the world. I would say that on most issues, my subcommittee worked very closely with the administration and was quite supportive of our efforts in that part of the world.

Q: When the Reagan administration came in, were you concerned that he came from sort of the California right-wing which had been strongly supportive of Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek and all. This was California politics, particularly Republican politics. Were you concerned at the time that he was going to overindulge in Taiwanese support?

SOLARZ: I was very concerned based on his statements during the campaign that Reagan might adopt an approach toward Taiwan which would in effect result in a rupture in our relationship with China in ways that could have disadvantageous consequences for the United States in terms of our global position, given the extent to which our emerging relationship with China was serving as an effective counterweight to the Soviet Union. But, of course, Reagan ultimately yielded to the imperatives of reality and the advice of

his counselors and refrained from extending to Taiwan the kind of recognition he had suggested he would during the course of the campaign.

Q: What was the situation within the House of Representatives? Did you find sort of a reemergence of almost a China lobby or had this pretty well dissipated?

SOLARZ: I don't recall any particularly activity in the Congress in terms of Taiwan at the time Reagan became President. Taiwan did become something of an issue later on in his administration when I and some others began to raise the question of human rights and democracy on Taiwan. In the early '80s, Taiwan was very much of a one party dictatorship. Martial law was in existence. There was no free press. Opposition political parties were banned. So, I began to hold hearings on the absence of human rights in Taiwan. Also, there were a number of incidents during those years in which there was, for example, a Taiwanese resident of the United States, Chen Wen-cheng, who was studying at Carnegie Mellon in Pittsburgh, who returned to Taiwan to visit his family one summer, and because he had been observed at a meeting of Taiwanese in Pittsburgh by an agent of the Kuomintang, which apparently at that time engaged in fairly close surveillance of Taiwanese in the United States, at which Chen Wen-cheng had apparently expressed some mild criticism of the KMT [Kuomintang, or nationalist party] or the regime in Taiwan. He was picked up by the police in Taipei and after being interrogated for a day was next found dead having allegedly jumped to his death from the fifth floor of a library on the campus of one of the universities. It was obvious that he hadn't committed suicide, but that he had been murdered by the authorities. This generated tremendous amounts of concern. I held hearings on it and enacted legislation prohibiting the sale of American arms to any country which engages in the repression of American citizens or permanent residents in the United States. This was then followed by the murder and assassination of Henry Liu, who was a Taiwanese who had written a critical biography of Chiang Ching-kuo, who was the son of Chiang Kai-shek, and then the ruler of Taiwan. Liu was assassinated in a San Francisco suburb. We held hearings on this issue. We adopted resolutions calling for the elimination of marshall law and the establishment of democracy on Taiwan. While I don't think the adoption of these resolutions by themselves did the trick, the fact is that after the transition to democracy in the Philippines and in South Korea, Taiwan also abolished martial law, legalized opposition parties, permitted the establishment of a free press, and became a genuine democracy.

Q: Can you describe the effectiveness of what amounted to the KMT's lobby in the United States? Over the years, they have become rather effective.

SOLARZ: They did have a lot of friends on Capitol Hill, a lot of members of Congress and congressional staffers who visited Taiwan. To the extent that it was seen as a rival to Communist China, that redounded to its credit. Obviously, the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act reflected, in the wake of normalization, strong sympathies for Taiwan in the Congress. But there was also strong support in the Congress for the causes of democracy and human rights. When it came to adopting legislation and passing resolutions the purpose of which was to encourage respect for human rights and to

encourage democracy on Taiwan, the Taiwan lobby was not particularly effective in preventing the passage of that legislation.

Q: Also, the fact that they were so ham-handed in doing this.

SOLARZ: Right. It's important to understand that, in effect, there were two Taiwan lobbies. There was a Kuomintang lobby, which essentially lobbied for American support for Taiwan from threats on China. But then there was a Taiwanese lobby of indigenous Taiwanese who had been born on Taiwan, native Taiwanese now living in the United States, whose main concern was not so much the threat from China but the need for democracy and self-determination on Taiwan itself.

Q: In a way, did the fact that these two were opposed to each other in certain matters make it easier for you to operate?

SOLARZ: They opposed each other in the early and mid-1980s on the issue of democracy and human rights on Taiwan. When it came to the defense of Taiwan from threats from China, they were in agreement.

Q: But at a certain point, if you're stopping military equipment from going to Taiwan, that is hurting the defense of Taiwan.

SOLARZ: In fact, we never did stop sending arms to Taiwan, but the fact that the possibility was there certainly had a salutary effect on Taiwan in terms of getting them to back off from the campaign of surveillance and repression they were conducting in the United States. They had a black list in terms of people from Taiwan to whom they wouldn't give visas to return to Taiwan.

I think the point was that they had been conducting this campaign of surveillance and repression in the United States and even the friends of the KMT felt that it was utterly unacceptable for a foreign government to be intimidating people on American soil - in effect, denying them their rights under the Constitution to freedom of speech, the press, assembly, and the like. Eventually, the authorities on Taiwan brought this campaign to an end. I'd like to think that the response of the Congress to things like the killings of Chen Wen-cheng and Henry Liu was a factor in their decision to do so.

Q: Turning to the Philippines, you took over this subchairmanship just at the time when all hell was breaking loose in the Philippines, didn't you? What was the role of Congress, particularly the House of Representatives, in the overthrow or the disposition of the Marcos regime?

SOLARZ: Actually, at the time I became chairman of the subcommittee, things were relatively quiet in the Philippines. There was clearly a problem. Marcos had declared martial law in 1972. But it wasn't until the assassination of Ninoy Aquino in 1983 that the situation began to markedly deteriorate. During that time, a number of trends were underway which were generating a real crisis. First, you had a significant decline in the

economy, resulting in part from the “crony” capitalism which Marcos had established there and the siphoning off of much of the wealth of the country - his cronies, who were given monopolies in various economic sectors, combined with the growth of the communist dominated New People's Army [NPA], which in the absence of any real democracy in the Philippines provided one of the few means by which Filipinos who were unhappy with the status quo could seek change in the country. But this was all in a way brought to a head by the assassination of Aquino, which I think set in motion the forces which ultimately led to Marcos' downfall.

During this period of time, I conducted hearings on the situation in the Philippines. I got to know Aquino, who had gone into exile in the United States. In fact, he announced publicly for the first time that he was planning to return to the Philippines at a hearing before my subcommittee in 1983. I remember speaking to him at the end of the hearing and telling him that I was planning to go to the Philippines in the next several weeks on a trip to Asia. I asked him whether he wanted me to look him up when I got there. We both assumed, since he still had a death sentence over his head which had not been commuted and Marcos didn't want him to return, that if he did return, he would be picked up by the authorities and put under house arrest at best and prison at worst. I know I didn't think that he would be killed within seconds of stepping off the plane. Ninoy said that he would very much like for me to look him up when I got there. As fate would have it, he delayed his departure for a couple of weeks at Imelda's request, with whom he met in the States before he returned. So, I- (end of tape)

I had met Marcos on this trip. Before I had seen him, he had been incommunicado for the previous couple of weeks and the country was rife with speculation about where he was and what was going on. When I saw him at the Malacanang Palace, he looked extremely unwell. His face was all puffed up and he looked jaundiced. He walked very slowly. He had to gradually ease himself down into his seat. Although he certainly appeared intellectually quite alert and vigorous (he claimed that he was writing three books), the reality was that he had had a kidney operation and had both of his kidneys removed. I left the Philippines the day before Ninoy returned and went to Bangkok. I was called there and told that he had just been killed. I immediately called the embassy in Manila and asked them to ask his friends and family and the leaders of the opposition if they would like me to come back to pay my respects. When I was told that they would very much welcome such a gesture, I altered the plans for the rest of my trip and went back to the Philippines. I went through Singapore. I remember meeting with Lee Kwan Yew, who was then Prime Minister. He strongly urged me not to go to Manila on the grounds that it would be an implicit indication that I thought Marcos was responsible and since I had tremendous respect for Prime Minister Lee, I must say that this somewhat shook me up. I certainly didn't want to do anything which would be destabilizing. But my wife was with me at the time. She felt very strongly that going back was the right thing to do. I also called David Steinberg, who was one of the preeminent Philippine scholars in the U.S., who I was personally very friendly with, and got him out of bed at five in the morning, and told him what was happening and asked him for his judgement. He strongly urged me to go as well.

So, I did go back. I must say, it was probably the best decision I ever made in public life. I think the Filipino people deeply appreciated the fact that there was at least one ranking American official who cared enough to come to Ninoy's home, where his body was lying in state, to pay his respects. I remember vividly that, when I got back, I was met at the airport by people from our embassy. I went first for a briefing. I recall vividly the station chief arguing that Marcos couldn't possibly have done it, that probably it was the communists who had knocked him off in order to destabilize the regime. This, of course, was the story put out by Marcos. They had, in fact, simultaneously assassinated some fellow named Galman, who was some communist that they had in prison, and blamed it on him. But that was obviously a put up story.

After the briefing, I was picked up at the embassy by Doy Laurel, who was one of the leaders of the opposition who I had become friendly with and whom I had seen together with other opposition leaders just a few days earlier when I was there. He took me to Ninoy's home. When I got there, there were long lines stretching for blocks of ordinary Filipinos who wanted to pay their respects. My wife and I went into his home. You can see the cover of Newsweek which caught the picture of it where I was looking at him. His mother had insisted that his body be left exactly as it was when he was killed so the Filipino people could see what had been done to him. This was late in the afternoon. We were led into a small room without any air conditioning or any lights, just a little light streaming in through a window, where his mother was. People were fanning themselves with fans. I had not met his mother before, but she was a woman of great dignity. She literally poured her heart out to us and told us how she had pleaded with him not to return and how he had told her that if Marcos wanted to kill him, he could just as easily kill him on the streets of Boston as on the streets of Manila and that if he was going to die he would prefer to die on the soil of his own country than the territory of a foreign land. It was really a very moving experience.

That evening, we had dinner at the home of Doy Laurel with some of the other leaders of the opposition and two of Ninoy's sisters. I'll never forget, at the end of the dinner, one of the opposition leaders who was present, Soc Rodrigo, sang the song, "The Impossible Dream" from "Man of LaMancha." Song is a very important part of Filipino culture. Never was there a more haunting and meaningful rendition of that melody. Of course, at the time, the dream of democracy did seem like an impossible dream in the Philippines, yet just a few years later the tyrant had fallen and democracy triumphed.

Q: When you got back to Congress, what was done? Was the administration unsure of what to do? Was Congress pushing? How were things playing out there?

SOLARZ: In the wake of that, I began to move for restrictions on our foreign aid program to the Philippines. I was increasingly concerned about the situation in the Philippines at that time. It was clear Marcos was losing the confidence of the people. The NPA was making significant inroads. We had important strategic interests in the Philippines. Our two most significant military bases in Asia were located at Clark Field and Subic Bay. This created a real problem. On the one hand, if nothing was done, there was a real possibility that at some point Marcos could be overthrown by the NPA and this

would among other things not only be a disaster for the Filipino people, given what had happened under the communists in Vietnam and Cambodia, but it would also be a severe setback for the United States, which would have lost its access to the facilities at Clark and Subic. So, clearly there was a need for change. At the same time, Marcos was obviously unwilling to make the kind of political, economic, and social reforms that were necessary. That would facilitate a challenge to his own power by the opposition. If we pushed too hard, there was also a risk that Marcos himself might abrogate the base agreement. So, it was a very difficult challenge. In order to square the circle, what I advocated was shifting the mix of military and economic assistance which we were obligated to provide the Philippines under the base agreement by reducing the military aid and increasing the economic aid as a way of sending the signal to the Philippines that we were deeply concerned about the situation. By providing the same amount of aid provided for in the agreement, the overall level of aid levels, we could take the position that we were maintaining our commitments under the agreement, but by shifting the aid from military to economic, we were diminishing Marcos' ability to repress his own people while also making it clear that we were not pleased with the absence of democracy and human rights in the Philippines. That approach was adopted by the Congress. The administration opposed it, but it was nevertheless adopted. So, that was one way in which I tried to encourage change in the Philippines. There was a report in The Village Voice, which is a weekly newspaper in New York, which alleged sometime in 1985 that Marcos had acquired a real estate empire in New York, presumably with the proceeds of his ill-gotten gains. But of course, they did not cite any evidence in the story other than anonymous sources. But since there was a possibility that if this was true, the properties might have been acquired with foreign aid funds in the Philippines, I launched an investigation into the hidden wealth of the Marcoses in the United States. It ultimately turned out that they had in fact acquired a real estate empire in Manhattan worth about \$350 million, which wasn't bad for someone with a salary of \$7500 a year. But one of the purposes I had in conducting that investigation was not simply to determine whether foreign aid funds had been used inappropriately for that purpose, but also to contribute to his delegitimization so that the opposition in the Philippines could benefit in the context of the election which was going to be held there for the presidency. I think in fact that it did make such a contribution.

Then, you may recall when the snap election was held, which Marcos announced on American television, Marcos attempted to steal the election. He got caught doing so, particularly when a group of computer operators, the Philippine Election Center walked out of the counting center when they were instructed to enter false figures on their computers. If there is any one lesson to be learned from this whole experiences, it's that the American people are not likely to tolerate it when two bit dictators attempt to steal supposedly democratic elections on American television. So, I convened a meeting with my subcommittee and got a unanimous vote to cut off all military assistance to the Philippines while Marcos remained in power. Rich Armitage and Paul Wolfowitz were the key people in the State Department and the Pentagon dealing with Asia. They came to my office because they had heard what I was planning to do. They pleaded with me not to do it on the grounds that if we cut off the military assistance to the Philippines, the NPA might march into Manila unobstructed. I argued that, given what had happened in the

Philippines, the best way to assure a victory for the NPA was to keep Marcos in power and that we now had to move as expeditiously as possible to pull the rug out from under him and to get him out because he had become the number one recruiting sergeant for the NPA. So, we obviously didn't agree on that, but when my committee met and voted unanimously, which was very significant because we had some Republicans on the subcommittee like Jerry Soloman and Dan Burton, who had been relatively supportive of Marcos, not because they approved of his corruption or his repression, but basically because they felt he was a friend of the United States and the bases were very important, that we needed the Philippines to counter the communist challenge in Asia, and that therefore we couldn't afford to indulge our propensities for democracy and human rights. But once Marcos was caught stealing the election on national television, they thought enough was enough and the time had come to seek change.

Q: Did you feel that Ronald Reagan was calling the shots or was there sort of a struggle for the soul of Ronald Reagan?

SOLARZ: There clearly was a struggle for the soul of Ronald Reagan. George Shultz played an important role in bringing Reagan around to the conclusion that the time had come for Marcos to go. He was greatly assisted by Phil Habib, a senior American diplomat who, by the way, came from my district in Brooklyn. He was dispatched as a special emissary after the election and returned from the Philippines with a report that there was no longer any support for Marcos and that the time had come for him to go.

So, Reagan, who had initially responded to the results of the snap election by saying there was cheating on both sides, which led me to say publically that this was proof positive that they were smoking hashish in the White House because it was obvious that the overwhelming bulk of the chicanery was the result of the Marcos machine rather than the opposition. Eventually, Reagan was persuaded that he had to go. Interestingly enough, the medium for that message was Paul Laxalt who was a Senator at the time who had previously been sent by Reagan out there to meet with Marcos and encourage him to make some reforms and whom Marcos called to find out what Reagan thought. Laxalt basically told him the time had come to leave. Interestingly enough, a little bit earlier today, I played tennis with Laxalt, who lives on the other side of Old Dominion and who is a tennis partner of mine.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point?

SOLARZ: Okay.

Q: Today is January 29, 1999. Once Marcos was out and the Philippines had its election, was there anything that particularly got you involved or were things pretty well in place?

SOLARZ: Actually, I remained very much involved in the effort to strengthen and support this democracy in the Philippines which had been reborn after more than a

decade of martial law. For example, in September of 1986, President Aquino came to Washington and delivered an address before a joint session of Congress. It was a magnificent speech about the meaning of democracy and of the United States for the Philippines and an eloquent appeal for assistance to enable her government to translate the promise of democracy into a better life for the Filipino people. I was so impressed and moved by her speech that I decided to see if it was possible to strike while the iron was hot and was able to secure the agreement of the Democratic and Republican leadership of the House, and of the relevant committees, for a unanimous consent procedure later that day, only several hours after Aquino had delivered her address to a Joint Session, in which we increased by \$200 million the level of foreign aid for the Philippines, which led Senator Dole a day or two later to observe that this was the largest honorarium in the history of the Republic. But eventually the Senate went along and that increase was put into law. I also was able to secure the adoption of legislation providing additional aid to the Philippines for the implementation of an agrarian reform program. I remember also visiting the Philippines for the opening of the new parliament there, which was an important milestone in the transition to democracy. I recall very vividly an address that Cory gave to the visiting delegations that came from all over the world in connection with the opening of the new parliament, the text of which I have in a frame up on the wall, in which she referred to me as the Lafayette of the Philippine Revolution, which was very touching, although it is, I must admit, probably a somewhat hyperbolic reference. Still, it's better to be compared to Lafayette than to Cornwallis.

Q: From this time, I assume that you were making visits to the Philippines. I know your habit is to go out and talk to a lot of people. Was there concern about how the new government was functioning and its effectiveness and whether there might be a military coup or something like this?

SOLARZ: There were, in fact, half a dozen military coups. Fortunately, they were all thwarted. But it clearly was a very serious concern. There was this movement in which the so-called reform elements in the Philippine military were agitating not only for changes, but also for power. They attempted to seize it on a number of occasions, but their efforts were fortunately frustrated.

I should also add that there was one other major initiative concerning the Philippines that I was involved in. That was the effort to establish a multilateral assistance initiative, a so-called "MAI," for the Philippines. This began with a letter which I drafted and circulated that was signed by Jack Kemp and myself in the House and Alan Cranston and Dick Lugar in the Senate. It was a letter to Secretary Shultz in which we argued that we had a significant stake in a successful transition in the Philippines and this could be greatly assisted by a level of assistance that was more than the U.S. could provide by itself, but we believed that if we were prepared to take the leadership, it might be possible to pull together a consortium of other countries to provide a significant increase in the overall level of aid for the Philippines. In response to that letter, Shultz convened a meeting in the State Department to which he invited the signatories of the letters and a few others, plus the key people in the Department, as a result of which a kind of in-house task force was established, led by John Whitehead, who was the Deputy Secretary of State. It

recommended that we move forward in this regard. As a result of it, this initiative was launched. The United States committed itself to provide up to a billion dollars over several years. But the overall level of assistance was in the vicinity of ten billion when you count the contributions made by other countries. I think that turned out to be very helpful in giving the Philippine government resources designed to show that democracy could succeed in giving people a better life.

Q: What about bases? During this time, did our bases there raise their heads?

SOLARZ: This, of course, was a continuing issue. This was one area where I perhaps somewhat miscalculated. I had thought that when Corry became President, particularly in the context of a more forthcoming American attitude toward her administration, that it would be possible to persuade the Filipinos to renew the base agreement when it expired. As fate would have it, that turned out not to be possible. Corry, as I anticipated, did negotiate a new base agreement with the United States, but it was ultimately rejected by the Philippine senate.

Q: Did you have any legislature to legislate your relationship at this point?

SOLARZ: Not formally, but informally, I became very friendly and very close to Ramon Mitra, who became the Speaker of the Philippine house. I also knew several of the Senators very well from the days when they were in the opposition to the Marcos regime and I was actively engaged in an effort to try to develop a more supportive American foreign policy toward the struggle for democracy in the Philippines. So, I would see these people whenever I went to the Philippines and sought out their views and valued their judgement. But there weren't any formal parliamentary exchanges.

Q: Those aren't overly helpful anyways. It's really the personal ones...

Moving on to China during this time when you were involved in Asian affairs, there was this glow of "Boy, we're now having relations with China." Prior to Tiananmen Square, was that still going or was the bloom a bit off?

SOLARZ: I think the Sino-American relationship prior to Tiananmen was continually improving. There may have been some blips here and there, but basically, once the modernization program commenced, once many of the internal restrictions on the movement of people around the country and the like were lifted, once tens of thousands of Chinese students were permitted to come to the States to study, once barriers to foreign investment were lifted, as trade began to dramatically increase, the relationship between our two countries clearly was growing stronger across the board - varying from our commercial ties to an increasingly cooperative military relationship. But Tiananmen shattered all of that and sent the relationship into a tailspin.

Q: As you were observing the developments in Tiananmen, was there an effort on our part, particularly on the House of Representatives to send messages to the Chinese leadership to try to do this peacefully? It dragged on for a considerable amount of time.

You saw this confrontation between the demonstrators and the Central Committee?

SOLARZ: I am not aware of any efforts by the Congress - or at least I don't recall them - to influence the Chinese leadership during the period when the demonstrations were taking place in Beijing and many other cities around the country. But clearly once the decision was taken to disperse the demonstrators through the use of lethal force, it had profound consequences for our relationship.

Q: Did that generate any actions within Congress?

SOLARZ: It clearly did. First of all, there was a tremendous backlash in the Congress and a feeling that it was no longer appropriate to do business as usual with what many people began to refer to as "the butchers of Beijing." This in turn led to an effort to impose sanctions against China. I recall in the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen when pressures were rapidly building up for some expression of congressional concern that as we shaped our package of legislatively imposed sanctions - which included, for example, a suspension of the trade and development program assistance to China and a number of other things - that there were some suggestions at the time that we cut off MFN (most favored nation status), but I thought that would be going too far and managed in the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen as the Congress moved to adopt the legislation to keep the MFN out of it... Subsequently, in later years, whether or not to extend MFN to China and, if so, on what basis, became a major source of congressional controversy and concern. But in the immediate aftermath, we were able to keep that out of the sanctions legislation that was adopted. It also led to a series of hearings on what had happened and its implications for American policy. My recollection is that congressional attitudes were to some extent exacerbated by what appeared to be a relatively soft response to what had happened by the administration. Of course, when President Bush sent Deputy Secretary Eagleburger and Brent Scowcroft (the head of the NSC [National Security Council]) on a secret mission to Beijing to talk with the Chinese leaders in spite of the fact that our formal policy was to suspend all high-level contacts, it created a bit of a firestorm on the Hill. We had a hearing on it in which the administration witness who was sent up to defend the administration's policy gave a somewhat hapless and unimpressive presentation before our committee.

Q: One of the things that has always struck me is, with this cutting off of relations or trying to signify something, you end up by almost shooting yourself in the foot. Sitting back and pouting and not talking to somebody is not the way to get ahead.

SOLARZ: There was no serious effort to force the administration to suspend our diplomatic relationship or to close down our embassy, for example. I think most people recognized that would be counterproductive. The issue fairly quickly became what should we do about MFN? Clearly, most favored nation tariff status, given the level of Chinese exports to the United States and its importance to China in terms of their whole modernization program and hopes for economic development, constituted the major source of potential leverage the United States had over China. But that begged the question of what one could get for it. Essentially, there were three schools of thought. One expressed by the administration was that cutting off, or conditioning, MFN would be

ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst, and that we would in any case be shooting ourselves in the foot by depriving American consumers of opportunities to purchase lower-priced Chinese goods or handicapping the efforts of American investors to invest in China since China could be expected to retaliate if we cut off MFN. Then there were those who argued that what happened at Tiananmen Square was so egregious that we had no moral alternative but to terminate MFN and it was inappropriate to provide this preferential tariff status to China even though MFN in effect was the tariff status we gave to just about every country in the world. Finally, there were those who tried to strike a middle ground (I was among them.) who said that we ought to try to use China's desire for MFN to enable us to leverage changes in China in terms of human rights by establishing some conditions for the renewal of MFN, which would give China an incentive to move in the direction that we wanted it to move in order to preserve the benefits of this tariff status.

Q: How did it develop?

SOLARZ: The way it developed was that each year for the next few years, there were votes in the House about what to do. My recollection is that the effort to take away MFN was consistently rejected, but legislation was adopted establishing conditions on MFN, but that was vetoed by the President and the veto was not overridden. So, it never became law until Clinton became President and he by executive order established conditions in the first year of his administration for the renewal of MFN. In the second year when he concluded that those conditions had not been met, and was confronted with the reality that he might have to terminate MFN, he changed the policy and decided to renew it anyway, on the grounds that we would have a better chance of achieving our objectives in the context of continuing MFN than in the context of cutting it off. One of the things I recall very vividly about the effort to establish conditions on the renewal of MFN was a meeting in which I participated off the House floor with those members of Congress who had expressed the greatest interest in this issue. It was really fascinating to observe the dynamics of this meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to determine what conditions would be put in the legislation for the renewal of MFN. What fascinated me was that each person present at the meeting had their own particular hobby horse or issue as it were. One, for example, was mostly concerned about the repression of religious freedom and the incarceration of Christian clerics. They wanted a condition on that. Another one was most concerned about the Chinese policy of limiting the number of children a couple could have, which he felt led to infanticide and abortion. So, he wanted a condition on that. Someone else was mostly concerned about the political prisoners that had been arrested in the wake of Tiananmen Square. And so on.

Of course, in order to reach an agreement among this informal caucus, everyone basically accepted the condition that was most important to each member. But the net result was a long list of conditions which it was most unlikely the Chinese would ever be able or willing to meet, thereby in a sense forsaking the leverage which the Chinese desire for MFN gave us. In other words, the concept of conditioning MFN made some sense, but to make it really work, one would need to have a fairly limited list of conditions which the Chinese government would conceivably be able or willing to meet. By developing a

much longer list without really doing the hard work of establishing priorities, we ended up with a set of conditions which I feared, had they been enacted, would not have produced the changes we sought.

Q: Taiwan must have been a factor in your dealing with China?

SOLARZ: It wasn't really a factor in the debates over MFN. But I did spend a lot of time in the 1980s on the Taiwan issue. I think the Congress actually played a very important role in both encouraging and facilitating the transition to democracy on Taiwan. In the early 1980s, for example, Taiwan was under martial law. Opposition political parties were prohibited. They didn't have a free press. I conducted a series of hearings focusing on this issue. Resolutions were adopted calling on the Taiwan authorities to move in the direction of democracy. At one point, there was a tragic incident in which a young Taiwanese student at Carnegie Mellon University of Pittsburgh had gone home to visit his family. Because he had been overheard at a campus meeting expressing criticism of the government on Taiwan, he was picked up when he returned by the police, brutally tortured, and killed by being thrown out of a fifth story window on the grounds of one of the local universities. This created a real hullabaloo. We had some hearings on this and ended up enacting legislation prohibiting arms sales to any country which engaged in the surveillance and harassment of their nationals here in the United States. We discovered in the course of these hearings that the Taiwanese government had a very sophisticated and pervasive surveillance network in which they attempted to keep an eye on Taiwanese students in the United States.

Q: Koreans to a lesser extent were concerned about this in an earlier period.

SOLARZ: I think the Taiwanese authorities would acknowledge that this pressure was a factor in persuading them to eliminate martial law, to legalize opposition political parties, and to accept the emergence of a genuine democracy on Taiwan, which as I felt all along would significantly strengthen the ties between our two countries and the American commitment to the security of Taiwan.

Q: Did you find in dealing with Taiwan that there were true believers in the Chiang Kai-shek/Kuomintang way of doing things? In other words, they were so anti-communist that they would go to the right and they hadn't really moved to see what was changing?

SOLARZ: There was clearly very strong support for Taiwan on the Hill from those who felt that communist dictatorship in the People's Republic of China posed a continuing threat to Taiwan. But even those who were very sympathetic to Taiwan were not sympathetic to the use of strong-arm tactics against permanent residents in the United States whose freedom as residents of our country was being compromised by these efforts to surveil. There was a blacklist, for example, of Taiwanese living in the United States who couldn't get visas for Taiwan, which constituted a source of pressure against them while they were here. I had the feeling that even the greatest friends of Taiwan felt that what the Taiwanese authorities did on Taiwan was their business, but what they did in the United States was our business. Efforts to suppress speech, to intimidate people,

and worst of all to take physical action against them on Taiwan, or when they returned to the United States was simply unacceptable.

Q: What about Cambodia? Cambodia just hasn't gone away.

SOLARZ: No, and it remained very much an issue in the 1980s after the Vietnamese drove Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge from power in the end of 1978/beginning of 1979. Here a very interesting thing happened. I think it was in 1984. I had been reading in the early 1980s that the non-communist resistance forces in Cambodia led by Prince Ranariddh, son of now King Sihanouk, who had a faction known as Funcinpec and also Sonn San, a very distinguished Cambodian leader who led a group known as the KPNLF [Kampuchean People's National Liberation Front] were fighting to overthrow the Vietnamese dominated regime in Phnom Penh and the liberation of their country from the clutches of Vietnam, but also from the clutches of the Khmer Rouge. They favored the establishment of a multiparty parliamentary democracy. I would meet with them on visits to the refugee camps in Thailand and also on their visits to the United States in which they were seeking American support.

They wanted more tangible forms of assistance, including military assistance. I found it increasingly difficult to resist their importunings. Personally, I was very sympathetic from the beginning and wanted to help them, but I felt that in view of what had happened to the United States in Vietnam there simply wouldn't be any political support in the Congress for an effort to provide them help. Fears would undoubtedly be generated that this would lead to another Vietnam-like involvement. So, the political climate didn't seem right. Then I think it was around 1984 that two things happened which convinced me that times were changing and that such an initiative might succeed. The both happened right around the same time. One was Elizabeth Becker, who was a correspondent for the Washington Post who had written a book about Cambodia, had an op-ed piece in the Post in which she advocated providing assistance to the non-communist resistance. I thought coming from someone like her who had not been known as a supporter of American policy towards China, this was very significant and perhaps a harbinger of change in attitudes on the issue. Then around the same time at a closed hearing of our subcommittee on Cambodia, one of the members, Bob Torrecelli, expressed the view that we should provide assistance to the non-communist resistance forces. This was someone who, like myself, had been opposed to American policy in Vietnam. That convinced me that the climate was right for such an initiative. So, I introduced legislation which actually was adopted to provide assistance to the non-communist resistance forces. There was even a big debate on it on the floor of the House. An effort was made to remove those provisions which made possible the provision of military assistance. That was defeated. The legislation was adopted. A program of assistance was initiated. As it turned out, the administration never used the authority to provide lethal military assistance which they could have provided, but they did provide dual use military equipment and other forms of assistance to these two resistance movements, which perhaps were more important symbolically than substantively, but it was an indication that the United States supported them. It clearly enhanced their morale. To some extent, it kept them in pocket and enabled them to survive. I believe that this

initiative was totally vindicated when, after the Paris agreement leading to an end of the conflict in Cambodia and elections were held, the non-communist resistance forces emerged as the victors in the election.

Q: This was also catching the spirit of the times in that you had the Reagan administration, which had been supplying weapons to the Afghan resistance to the Soviets and the Contras in Nicaragua. You were catching a wave at that time.

SOLARZ: Right. I agree with that. There was the so-called Reagan Doctrine which suggested that we should provide help for those indigenous forces fighting communist repression in their own countries. I wrote an article about this in Foreign Policy magazine in which I contended that we should take two from column A and reject two from column B. I made that case that we should provide aid to the non-communist resistance in Cambodia and Afghanistan, but suggested for a variety of reasons that I thought it was counterproductive to do it in the case of Angola and Nicaragua. I attempted to set forth some criteria for determining under what circumstances it was appropriate to provide military assistance to indigenous resistance forces and when it was not.

Q: You left Congress when?

SOLARZ: At the end of 1992.

Q: Up to that time, had Cambodia moved towards a more democratic government or was there still a Vietnamese sway at that point?

SOLARZ: At the time I left, the government in Cambodia was still the government that had been installed by Vietnam. I don't believe the Vietnamese forces had fully withdrawn, although they had commenced their withdrawal. I should, perhaps, add that it was during the course of the 1980s when my work as chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia that I developed, during the course of a trip to Southeast Asia, the idea for a UN supervised administration of Cambodia that provided the basis for the eventual settlement of the Cambodian conflict. What actually happened was that during the course of a trip to Southeast Asia in 1988, trying to figure out how the United States might most effectively promote an end to the conflict in Cambodia, that would make it possible for Vietnam to withdraw and for the people of Cambodia to peacefully determine their own future and for the Cambodian refugees in Thailand, of which there were a few hundred thousand, to return to Cambodia. I came up with this idea one day at lunch under a blazing noonday sun under a Shamiyana in Site B, which was one of the camps controlled by Prince Ranariddh. Prior to that time, the effort to achieve a diplomatic settlement was deadlocked because the Vietnamese and the regime they supported in Phnom Penh led by Hun Sen were taking the position that in order for there to be a political settlement the resistance forces should lay down their arms and come back to Cambodia and participate in the election that would be run by the Cambodian government but which could be observed by foreign observers, perhaps under the auspices of the UN. The opposition, on the other hand, took the position that that was unacceptable because, first, it would require them to recognize the legitimacy of a regime which they considered illegitimate,

and also because they felt that any election run by the PRK [Khmer People's Republic] regime, even if it were witnessed by foreign observers, couldn't possibly be fair. So they insisted instead that the solution should be based on a dissolution of the existing regime in Cambodia and its replacement by a so-called quadripartite government in which power would be divided equally between the PRK government, each of the two non-communist resistance factions, and the Khmer Rouge. This in turn was rejected by the PRK regime in Vietnam on the grounds that by dissolving the existing government and permitting the Khmer Rouge to return to Phnom Penh as part of an interim government, it would create a power vacuum in which the Khmer Rouge could conceivably manipulate their way back into power. The thought I came up with, as a way of reconciling these conflicting positions, was to have a UN supervised solution in which the existing bureaucracy would be permitted to remain in place, thereby addressing the concerns of the PRK that a vacuum not be created, but that that bureaucracy should be placed - at least the key ministries or power ministries - under the direct supervision of the UN, which would give the opposition some comfort that the bureaucracy wouldn't be used to distort the results of the election. At the same time, by avoiding the establishment of a quadripartite government to replace the existing regime, it addressed the concerns of the PRK that the Khmer Rouge not be permitted to return with 1/4 of the power in Phnom Penh. I asked Ranariddh how he felt about this at the luncheon. He said that if everyone else accepted it, he'd have no problem with it. I then proceeded to ask other key players in the region how they felt. Somewhat to my surprise, I got a relatively sympathetic response. I remember Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore telling me he thought it would be the ideal solution but he doubted that Vietnam would accept it.

In any case, when I got back, I tried to urge the administration to accept this formula and to advocate it, but they felt that with the Paris Conference coming up in the next few months that they were obligated to support the position that had been taken by ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] and by China and by the resistance groups calling for the dissolution of the PRK regime and its replacement by this quadripartite arrangement. I tried to say I thought there was no way that the Vietnamese or the PRK would ever accept this. Furthermore, I didn't think it was a good idea if they did accept it. I agreed with their anxieties about giving the Khmer Rouge a role even in the interim government. But nevertheless the administration was committed to that point of view. The Paris Conference, as I had anticipated, was unable to reconcile these differences and it collapsed in failure. Then a month or two later, with the situation seemingly deadlocked, I met with Gareth Evans, who at the time was the Foreign Minister of Australia, and their UN ambassadors up in New York. In the course of the conversation, in which he indicated he was increasingly uncomfortable with Australia's support for this ASEAN/Chinese position, which the U.S. was supporting as well, because he was getting increasing criticism back home over Australia's support for a policy which called for the participation of the Khmer Rouge in a quadripartite government. So, I told him about my idea and urged him to go public with it, on the grounds that as the Foreign Minister of a major country in the region, he could give this formula for a UN supervised settlement a currency and a credibility that it wouldn't have coming just from a member of Congress. Sure enough, he embraced the idea. Two weeks later, he gave a speech on the floor of the Australian Senate putting it forward as an Australian initiative. Then he sent the top civil

servant in the Australian foreign ministry on a tour of the circuit touching base with all the relevant countries in the region, as a result of which they published a so-called Red Book in which they reported what they had heard in each country, together with their recommendations. It turned out that, indeed, this idea was viable, it did elicit relatively favorable responses, and at that point the ball was picked up by the five permanent members of the Security Council who over the next year or so were able to hammer out a formula which ultimately constituted the basis for the settlement in Cambodia, which made it possible to 350,000 refugees to return, for the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia to be fully verified, to China to terminate its military assistance to the Khmer Rouge, for the Khmer Rouge to leave their bases in Thailand, and for the people of Cambodia in a relatively free and fair election in which over 90% voted to determine their own destiny through an election in which they voted for the parties of their choice.

Q: The election went remarkably well. Shall we stop at this point?

SOLARZ: I think we'd better.

Q: Today is May 27, 2000. Steve, we've been doing a tour of the horizon of most of Southeast Asia. This was a time of dealing with Asia and Pacific affairs. We haven't covered the islands, Korea, and India. I thought what we would do is do that and the talk a bit about what happened afterwards and then send this off to be transcribed.

The Pacific islands. You were dealing with the Pacific and Asian affairs from when to when?

SOLARZ: I chaired the subcommittee from 1981 through the end of 1992.

Q: Could you talk about the status of the Pacific islands? We're talking mainly about the former Japanese and then our trust territories.

SOLARZ: The Marshalls, the Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau. I got involved in that issue because the negotiations with the trust territories for a compact of free association in which their status as trust territories in which the United States was totally responsible for the conduct of their affairs was to be transformed into a relationship in which they would be totally autonomous with respect to their internal affairs but where the United States would be given the responsibility for their defense and security and in which we would be given the right, if we deemed it necessary, to establish military facilities there in the future while no other country would be permitted to do so. The compact also had provisions for various payments and the establishment of a trust fund for these territories. Part of the understanding in the compact was also that the trust territories could be represented at the United Nations on their own. To the extent that the compact of free association needed to be ratified by the Congress, and also because

money had to be appropriated pursuant to the compact, it was referred to the Foreign Affairs Committee and also to the Interior Committee. Within the framework of the Foreign Affairs Committee, there were at least three subcommittees that had jurisdiction over the compact, but I was asked by Dante Fascell, the chairman of the full committee, to take the lead, as it were, in handling this for the Foreign Affairs Committee, which I agreed to do. I must say, as I got into it, I found that the issues that were involved were exceedingly complex. I ended up devoting a considerable amount of time to this but since I had been asked to do it and obviously it was a matter of some importance even if it didn't attract much public attention, I felt a responsibility to do it as well as possible.

What interested me the most about the compact and its consideration by the Congress was the extent to which it in effect constituted an exercise in self-determination and a kind of process of decolonization on the part of the United States. The compact under the rules of the House was also simultaneously referred to the Interior Committee, which had jurisdiction over the trust territories because they fell under the supervision of the Department of the Interior. What happened was that the Foreign Affairs Committee reported out a rather different version of the legislation to implement the compact than the version reported out by the Interior Committee. So what we decided to do - and this was something which was almost unprecedented in the history of the House, at least so far as I know - was to establish a kind of informal conference committee between the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Interior Committee to see if we could resolve our differences and present the full House with an agreed upon version of the legislation.

What was really interesting about this was that virtually all of the differences in the two bills, the one that came out of the Foreign Affairs Committee and the one that came out of the Interior Committee, were a reflection of a fundamentally different view of the process which informed the deliberations of each committee. From the perspective of the Foreign Affairs Committee, this was essentially an exercise in self-determination. We had negotiated an agreement with the leaders of the trust territories and we felt an obligation to respect the conclusions which they had reached on the theory that they were the best judge of how to protect and promote their own interests.

The view of the Interior Committee, on the other hand, was that our primary obligation was to the people of the trust territories and the Interior Committee had a very dim view of the integrity and judgement of the leaders of the trust territories. So, they wanted in effect to rewrite a number of the key provisions in such a way as to restrict the ability of the elected leaders of the trust territories to work their will, out of a genuine concern that, left to their own devices, the leaders would act in ways that were not in the best interests of their own people.

Of course, our view was, as I indicated, that this was an exercise in self-determination and it was inappropriate therefore to insist on restrictions on what the governments of the trust territories could do when the whole purpose of the compact was to free them from the rule of Washington. So, it was a very legitimate philosophical and political difference between the two committees, but at the end of the day, we were able to come up with language which I think was actually closer to the position of the Foreign Affairs

Committee. We also argued that many of the changes the Interior Committee wanted to make would have resulted in the undoing of the compact because it wouldn't have been acceptable to the leaders of the trust territories. But in any case, the legislation to implement the compact for the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshalls both passed. In the case of Palau, they had a peculiar constitutional provision which required that any provisions of the compact relating to nuclear weapons had to be approved by a 75% vote, which of course was almost impossible to obtain. But eventually, the Palauans succeeded in changing that constitutional provision and that then facilitated the adoption of a compact and a referendum in Palau and it was ultimately approved by the Congress.

Q: The way I gather, the Department of the Interior had acted really as a colonial office for some time after we took over these places from the Navy. It was the normal reluctance of a colonial bureaucrat's to let go.

SOLARZ: In this case, it wasn't so much the reluctance of the bureaucrats to let go because the Executive Branch had in fact negotiated a compact in which the Executive Branch would let go. The problem came from the reluctance of the Interior Committee to let go. By virtue of the fact that the trust territories were, in effect, a colonial dependency and by virtue of the fact that the department which administered the trust territories had to go to the Interior Committee for funding, the Interior Committee of the House and of the Senate exerted enormous influence over what happened in the islands. I have to say here that when I went to the trust territories to see what conditions were like there for myself, to meet with their leaders, and to get a better understanding of some of the issues involved in the compact, I was struck by the extent to which these trust territories seemed to me to be a classic example of the negative consequences of a welfare state without limits. We had been so generous in providing assistance to these people, particularly under the leadership of Phil Burton, a good friend of mine for whom I otherwise have enormous respect, but he chaired the subcommittee, bore responsibility here, that in the richest fishing grounds in the world, these people had forgotten how to fish and depended on canned tuna fish imported from God knows where in order to make tuna fish sandwiches for us for lunch when we were there. I don't remember what the exact percentages were, but an inordinate percentage earned their livelihood from working for the government rather than engaging in any productive enterprises themselves.

Q: I spent a week on Pohnpei, for example. You really could see it. Too many pickups, too much beer, and no productive work.

SOLARZ: Exactly. It resulted from the best of good intentions, but we had sort of sapped the initiative and determination of these people by giving them everything for free.

Q: Did you find any reluctance on the part of the Interior Committee or the staff of the Interior Committee (This had always been an interesting trip once a year to go out and all that.) A reluctance to let go of this?

I'm a little bit reluctant to psychoanalyze the staff and members of the Committee. But my impression was that it might not have been so much the fact that it gave them an

opportunity to make the trips. Perhaps that was a motivation. I honestly don't know how often they went out. I think it was rather a combination of two things. First, I think there was a kind of natural reluctance which most people have to relinquish power or authority over a subject upon which they can exercise considerable power and authority. Secondly, I think that in their own minds, they were convinced that they - the staff and members of the Committee - had the best interests of the people of the trust territories at heart and that the leaders of the trust territories were only interested in lining their own pockets and that to the extent that the compact of free association gave the trust territories total autonomy with respect to the conduct of their own affairs, it simply meant that these corrupt and self-serving leaders would be unconstrained in their efforts to milk the territories for all they were worth to the disadvantage of their own people. So, they wanted to get provisions in the implementing legislation which, in effect, would have rewritten the compact in such a way as to deprive the territories of the autonomy they had been granted by the compact and that of course would never have been acceptable to the trust territories, as a consequence of which the status quo would have been maintained.

Q: In a way, these negotiations were carried on between Washington lawyers representing the trust territories working for the various islands, but these basically were Washington lawyers working on their behalf, so much of the action was a Washington-centered thing. Did you run across that?

SOLARZ: I wasn't involved in the actual negotiations. I didn't get involved in this until the negotiations had been concluded. Until they were concluded, there were no real questions for our committee. There were questions for the Interior Committee. The Interior Committee had oversight and the authorization responsibilities for the monies to administer the trust territories. So, they were deeply involved, but we weren't involved. I had a hundred other issues to deal with. From a political perspective, this matter was of zero interest to my own constituents, so I only got involved in it at the point at which the compact had been negotiated, implementing legislation was required, our committee received jurisdiction over the bill, and within the framework of our committee, my subcommittee was one of three that had a jurisdictional claim. It wasn't my style to walk away from responsibilities. So, when the chairman asked me to handle it, I told him I would. If he had asked one of the other subcommittee chairmen to take the lead in handling it, I don't think I would have mounted a vigorous campaign to reverse the decision.

The other thing that interested me about this was, I came to realize that almost anything if you really get into it can be intellectually absorbing. As I said, there were a host of subsidiary issues, each one of which required a considerable amount of time to master the history, the intricacies, the consequences, the actual issues that were posed, in order to be able to make some kind of a rational judgement about how to proceed. But it was an intellectually challenging experience. In fact, I remember making very much this point to Les Gelb, who is now the president of the Council on Foreign Relations but at the time was a correspondent for the New York Times. He ended up writing a very, very long article on the whole question of the compact and how it was being handled in the Congress as a result.

Q: Let's turn to Korea. In this 1981-1992 period, was your district beginning to see the Mom and Pop Korean grocery store? Were you developing a Korean constituency?

SOLARZ: No. The Koreans were one of the few ethnic groups in New York who didn't have a presence in my district.

Q: What were the issues during this time, the Reagan-Bush period, on Korea?

SOLARZ: There were basically two fundamental issues. The first was the whole question of democracy and human rights in South Korea, which was something which I was very much concerned about and to which I was very much committed. I got to know Kim Dae Jung quite well during that period of time. In fact, I used to spend a good deal of my time whenever I went to South Korea either pleading with the existing leadership not to execute him or to let him enter a hospital for medical treatment or by visiting him at his home when he was under house arrest. When he went into exile in the United States, he came to our home for dinner on two occasions. So, I got to know him very well.

I also got to know Kim Young Sam, who was another leading dissident in South Korea, who ultimately became president, Cardinal Kim, and many others. I held many hearings on the political situation in South Korea, introduced and secured the adoption of resolutions calling for a democratic transition there. I recently reread the transcript of a hearing we had in the immediate aftermath of the decision by President Roh for a direct presidential election in South Korea in 1987, which really marked the transformation of South Korea from a military dictatorship into a civilian democracy.

The other main issue was North Korea and the situation on the Korean Peninsula. In fact, I was the first American official to ever meet with Kim Il Sung when I went to Pyongyang in 1980 for the purpose of trying to get a sense of what the possibilities were for a reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula and some kind of rapprochement between the North and the South and a consequent diminution of the possibilities of another war there. We did, after all, have 42,000 American troops just south of the DMZ [demilitarized zone]. There were over a million men under arms on both sides of the 38th Parallel. There was an ever-present possibility, if not a probability, of another war. So, I felt there were very significant American interests at stake there and I wanted to try to take the measure of North Korea by going there, which I did in 1980. I think I was the first person in history ever to fly from Pretoria to Pyongyang, from South Africa to North Korea, via Hong Kong and Beijing.

Q: Can you talk about your visit to Pyongyang and Kim Il Sung during 1980?

SOLARZ: I flew there from South Africa via Hong Kong and Beijing. Actually, I stopped in Seoul first to get the views of our friends in the South and of the American embassy and General Wickham, who was the commander of the combined U.S.-ROK forces. I remember very vividly asking General Wickham if there was any single thing Kim Il Sung could do that would be helpful in reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula that he conceivably might be willing to do. I thought that I would put such a proposal

before him. He said, "Why don't you ask him to demilitarize the Demilitarized Zone," which apparently was bristling with land mines and all sorts of other weapons, which of course I did but 20 years later, I think the demilitarized zone is even more militarized than it was then.

In any case, I actually got to North Korea because I was invited there by Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, whom I had gotten to know in 1979 after the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime. Sihanouk, who had been under house arrest by the Khmer Rouge, was released on condition that he go to New York to plead the case before the General Assembly of Cambodia before the UN. I had been deeply involved in the Cambodian issue, so I arranged to see Sihanouk in New York and we had a very moving encounter at that time. After he had been deposed in 1970 by Lon Nol, he had gone into exile and Kim Il Sung, the ruler of North Korea, had built him an 80 room palace. So, he was spending much of his time in Pyongyang. He invited me to come to Pyongyang. Obviously, he must have cleared it with Kim Il Sung, who saw this as an opportunity to reach out to the United States.

I was in North Korea for four days. I met with Kim Yong Nam, the foreign minister. I also met with Kim Il Sung for four hours at one of his presidential retreats in a coastal city by the name of Hamhung. I was shown a number of things in North Korea. When I got back, people asked me what it was like. I said, "Well, if you want to know what North Korea is like, all you have to do is read George Orwell's '1984.'" It was without question the most repressive regime anywhere in the world. In literally every room in the country I was in, I saw a picture of "The Great Leader" as they called him, Kim Il Sung, except one. That was the ward for premature babies at the new maternity hospital in Pyongyang, where I gather they felt the infants were not yet in a position to appreciate the visage of the Great Leader.

Q: What was your impression of Kim Il Sung?

SOLARZ: It was very interesting. On the one hand, here was a man who had created an incredibly ruthless and repressive regime, a kind of national concentration camp. I think tens if not hundreds of thousands had been executed or incarcerated. But in person, he was actually a rather avuncular character. He always had a smile on his face. He was sort of low-key. But of course, Hitler was very nice to children and little dogs. So, I suppose that doesn't tell us very much.

It was very difficult to conduct a conversation with him because basically he wasn't used to being interrupted or being asked questions, so he knew what he wanted to say and proceeded to say it for four hours. I would periodically interject with a question which he would then answer as briefly as possible and get back to what he wanted to say. I remember, one of the questions I asked him was what he had to say about the allegations from South Korea that North Korea was building tunnels under the Demilitarized Zone, which, of course, they were. His response was, "If I denied we were building the tunnels, you wouldn't believe me, so I won't deny it." That was a clever response given the realities. But of course, the fact that they were building the tunnels had ominous

implications for the preservation of peace on the Peninsula.

Q: What was your impression of the American role in a gradual arrival during this period that we're talking about of South Korea towards becoming a democracy?

SOLARZ: I think it was a critical role. To be sure, the people of South Korea themselves had the most to do with it since it was the continuing and relentless pressure being brought on the government by massive student demonstrations, but demonstrations which were also clearly being supported by the middle class, which had really become fed up with the repressive character of the regime. I think a lot of the credit is also due to the leadership of the opposition - men like Kim Dae Jung and Kim Yong Sam. At the end of the day, you have to give credit to President Roh, who was the heir apparent to Chun Doo Hwan, who could have been 100% confident of being elected president under the procedure they then had in South Korea which was for a kind of electoral college of only 4,000 people that would make the decision but which was totally controlled by the ruling establishment. When he agreed to direct presidential elections, which was the demand of the protestors and really of the people, he agreed to a process which he couldn't control and the outcome of which was uncertain. But I think he recognized that had he not agreed to such a transition, there could have been really dire consequences in the South. But he was willing to take that chance. Because the opposition at the end of the day couldn't unite on a single candidate when both Kim Dae Sung and Kim Yong Sam insisted on running, Roh in effect was able to win because the opposition split the vote that otherwise would have been given to a single opposition challenger.

Q: What was the role of our Congress in the pressure on this?

SOLARZ: I think the Congress had a role to play here in two ways. First we conducted a number of hearings on the issue which were covered by the Korean media and the Korean press. Obviously, reports were being sent out by the Korean embassy to the Korean government. Those hearings were an effective mechanism for conveying the concerns of the Congress over the absence of democracy and human rights in South Korea. To the extent that the security of the country depended on the willingness of the United States to meet its military commitments to South Korea, obviously, it was not in South Korea's interest to have a significant number of members of Congress very unhappy over the absence of democracy and human rights.

Secondly, as a manifestation of that concern over time, a number of resolutions were passed expressing the sense of the Congress about the need for change in South Korea. I think that obviously was brought to the attention of President Chun and Roh Tae Woo and others. I think they surely must have taken it into their calculation.

Q: During this 1981-992 time, were there hearings on the Kwangju suppression of dissidents in South Korea?

SOLARZ: I am almost positive that there were, but I have to confess that I don't remember.

Q: I think there must have been.

SOLARZ: I'd be amazed if there weren't.

Q: By the time you left in 1992, was Korea well on its way to being a solid member of the democratic...

SOLARZ: I think without question by that time it had become an established democracy. Like any democracy, it was not perfect. But it had made enormous strides. Kim Yong Sam, I think, had just or was about to be elected President. He for many years had been together with Kim Dae Jung one of the leaders of the opposition. Then he made an arrangement with the ruling party and became their nominee. But nevertheless, this was someone whose background was not as a military dictator, but as a political activist seeking democracy. So, yes, I think by that time Korea had clearly become a democratic country.

Q: During this time, what was your impression, if any, of the South Korean embassy here, the ambassador and all? Had they developed a pretty good operation here as far as what was going on, talking to people?

SOLARZ: I think so, but I'm not sure I'm really qualified to make a meaningful judgement. I had some contact with the embassy. I had more contact with the embassy after the transition to democracy had been made than before, but I can't say that I was in frequent communication nor they with me.

Q: On broad terms, did you find that most of the Asian countries came around and touched base with you and in a way knew how to play the Washington game, which is not just going into the Department of State?

SOLARZ: Not nearly as much as you might think. More often than not, I reached out to them rather than vice versa. One of the things I did, for example, I inaugurated an arrangement in which at the beginning of each session after I became chairman of the subcommittee, I would have a dinner at my home for several of the Asian ambassadors and the other members of the subcommittee to give them an opportunity to talk about their concerns. I remember working very closely with the Singaporean ambassador, Tommy Koh, when I was engaged in an effort to provide assistance to the non-communist resistance forces in Cambodia. I worked closely with the Australian ambassador on a number of issues, particularly Cambodia, as well. Also, I found myself being in fairly constant communication with the Indian ambassador. We would have a number of issues concerning the subcontinent before our committee. I tended to be very sympathetic to the Indian perspective.

Q: Let's turn to India during this 1981-1992 period. How were relations at that time?

SOLARZ: Our relationship with India was, if not quite frigid, very lukewarm. During the

Cold War, we had from the early '50s kind of embraced Pakistan as a presumptive bulwark against the advance of Soviet power into South Asia, as a consequence of which we had given them arms which were ostensibly for deterrence against the Soviet Union but which in reality were purchased by the Pakistanis for war against India. This in turn had generated a lot of resentments in India which felt that we were tilting toward a country that was hostile to them. Because of the Cold War and the American tilt toward Pakistan, India then tilted toward the Soviet Union, which in turn generated resentments over here. So, I would say the relationship was far from satisfactory throughout the '80s.

Q: How did you find the Reagan and Bush administrations responded to India? Did you feel that there were many attempts to change this frigid relationship?

SOLARZ: I think the relationship warmed up somewhat over the course of the 1980s, particularly after Reagan met Mrs. Gandhi for the first time in Cancun. But it remained kind of an arm's length relationship and wasn't that close. It was somewhat exacerbated by our support for Pakistan, which in turn derived from our desire to help the Mujaheddin resist the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the extent to which that resistance was dependent on the willingness by Pakistan to provide base camps and sanctuary in Pakistan. So, given our interest in helping to make it clear to the Soviet leadership that they would have to pay an unacceptably high price for attempting to invade and occupy another country by force, we developed a very close relationship with Pakistan and that in turn generated some concern and resentment in India.

Q: In Congress, was there the equivalent to an Indian lobby or was India just not of great interest?

SOLARZ: Today, there is an India Caucus with over 100 members in the House. When I was there, the India Caucus met in a phone booth. It wasn't very crowded for space in the phone booth since I was the only one in it. It's very interesting. We used to periodically get amendments on the floor from members usually who came from communities that had a large Sikh population who for one reason or another were hostile to India. They would offer amendments limiting or cutting off our aid program to India which I would oppose on the floor, usually being the only one to speak against it, although my position prevailed. But nowadays when such amendments are offered, dozens of members speak because they are members of the India Caucus or want to manifest their support for India.

Q: Was this purely because of Indian migration or was this also other interests that developed in making an Indian caucus?

SOLARZ: The establishment of the India Caucus was the reflection and culmination of a number of developments which had taken place over the previous two decades. First and by far the most important was the significant Indian immigration to the United States and the emergence in our country of an extremely affluent and very successful group of people, many of whom were physicians or professionals. In fact, according to the '90 census, the Asian-Indian community was the most affluent ethnic group in the country and had a higher per capita income than the American people as a whole. As these people

achieved professional and business success - for example, they are very big in the hotel industry, particularly in motels - they began to get more active politically like other immigrant communities had. They spend their first one or two decades establishing themselves economically and they then begin to participate in the political mainstream. In the case of the Indian community, that meant they started to make contributions and so on. I think lots of members of Congress recognized that it was in their political interest to identify in some way with India. But for the bulk of the 1980s, the amount of interest on the part of members in India was minimal.

Q: I think in a way we have sort of covered the area. Was there anything with Sri Lanka? Did that raise anything on your radar?

SOLARZ: It certainly did. Sri Lanka had been a country which in many ways was a model of political and economic development. The Overseas Development Council, had developed, under the leadership of Jim Grant, something called the PQLI Index. That was the "Public Quality of Life Index." This measured countries by things like the infant mortality rate, life expectancy, illiteracy, and so on. By that measure, Sri Lanka, although rather poor, ranked very high. So, when it became the victim of a terrible terrorist assault and a kind of civil war, it was a cause of some concern. I had a number of hearings on it. I went to Sri Lanka on a number of occasions. Once in the mid-'80s, I even met Mr. Prabakaran, the leader of the Tamil Tigers, in Madras, the capital of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu and of about 40 million Tamils, many of whom were sympathetic to the struggle of their brethren in Sri Lanka.

Q: Did you see that there was any role we could play?

SOLARZ: Other than occasionally adopting language expressing the support of the Congress for a negotiated settlement or for the fight against terrorism in Sri Lanka and the occasional authorization of money, there wasn't much of an issue.

Q: We've come up to 1992. What happened then?

SOLARZ: What happened was that the New York Legislature did to my district what Mr. Sykes and Mr. Picot did to the remnants of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East after World War I. My district was eviscerated. It was carved up into six different pieces. Actually, what happened was that the Legislature couldn't agree on a reapportionment plan. As a result of the '90 census, every state had to reapportion its congressional districts. New York lost three seats in the House. The Assembly was controlled by the Democrats. The Senate was controlled by the Republicans. They couldn't reach an agreement. So the reapportionment went to court. A state Supreme Court Justice in Brooklyn appointed a Special Master who drew up the plan that was accepted by the Court and was subsequently approved by the Legislature. So, I was put in a fundamentally untenable situation. Five parts of my district were each attached to a much larger part of a neighboring constituency where I would have been obligated to run against another incumbent under circumstances where the great bulk of the district would have been theirs rather than mine.

The sixth part was put in a newly created Hispanic district where I ultimately decided to run. At least there was no incumbent and there were several Hispanic candidates running. So, I thought I had a chance to win. If I had won, then I thought I could presumably consolidate my position over the next two years. But for understandable reasons, people there felt they would rather be represented by an Hispanic. As it turned out, that district was declared unconstitutional a couple of years later by the Supreme court on the grounds that in drawing up the districts, it was constitutionally impermissible to make race the primary consideration. In the case of the district I ran in, it wasn't the primary consideration; it was the sole consideration. They tried to find every Hispanic they could find. The district in which I think they thought I would run was a district which included the West Side of Manhattan going all the way down to Coney Island and Manhattan Beach in Brooklyn where I lived. But it turned out that 71% of the vote in that district came from the West Side of Manhattan and only 29% from Brooklyn. To make matters worse, this was in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, where I had kind of led the effort in the House to support President Bush and on the West Side of Manhattan where there were more Bolsheviks than there were left in Moscow, I probably was viewed as a cryptofascist at best and a war criminal at worst. The incumbent, Ted Weiss, was quite popular, very liberal. So, I felt that it would have been virtually impossible for me to have won in that district. As fate would have it, the day before the primary, Weiss died. He was very ill at the time. In a survey we took, it turned out that people thought that he was in better health than I was, although he was clearly, to anyone who saw him in Washington, extremely ill. I simply didn't have it in me to make his health an issue in the campaign. It may have been for the best, however, that I didn't run against him. Had I done so, I would undoubtedly have been blamed for his death and I might have suffered the ignominy of being defeated by a corpse, since the word would have gone out on the West Side that if you want to keep the congressional seat in Manhattan rather than have it go to Brooklyn, you have to vote for Weiss. If Weiss had won, even though he was no longer alive, then under the rules that existed, the Democratic nominee would have been picked by what was known as the County Committee. The County Committee consists of people who come from each election district in the congressional district. The overwhelming majority of them are activists associated with the local political clubs. So, Manhattan would have, as indeed it did, totally dominated that process and there was no way I could have made it. They would have preferred one of their own.

Q: You had been acting as an ambassador dealing with Cambodian affairs, hadn't you?

SOLARZ: I was appointed by the Clinton administration as a special emissary on Cambodia for one week following the coup by Hun Sen in the mid-'90s to basically go out to the region and determine what, if anything, the United States should do as a result of that development. There was supposed to be an ASEAN meeting at which the Secretary of State was going to be present and my mandate, as it were, was to report to her on the course of action the United States should take. So, I went out and met with the leaders in Thailand, Indonesia, and Singapore, and also with the Cambodian opposition, particularly the non-communists, that had fled to Thailand, as well as with Hun Sun and his people in Phnom Penh. I hooked up with Secretary Albright in Kuala Lumpur where

the ASEAN meeting was being held.

Q: Since you left Congress, your main concentration has been foreign affairs, hasn't it?

SOLARZ: Yes. Well, since I left Congress, I established a consultancy in which I provide assistance to companies that do business around the world that need some kind of government contract, license, permission, or perhaps a joint venture partner, or they have a problem with the foreign government that needs to be resolved. I tend to provide this kind of help in countries that I've gotten to know.

I've also been doing some lobbying work here in Washington on behalf of a number of governments. I serve on a few corporate boards. I've helped to establish and continue to play an active role in the International Crisis Group, which is an NGO [non-governmental organization] that endeavors to mobilize the international community to do what needs to be done to either avert or ameliorate manmade disasters such as Bosnia, Kosovo, etc.

Q: That is a never-ending business. It's not a quiet, placid period of time.

SOLARZ: No.

Q: Steve, I want to thank you very much.

End of interview