

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

WARREN ZIMMERMANN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

Q: Isn't this when Hitler declared war on the United States? I may be wrong, but anyway. This is an interview with Warren Zimmermann. My name is Charles Stuart Kennedy, and we are doing this on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Warren and I are old friends going back to the '60s in Belgrade. Warren, I'd like to start with a bit about your family, when and where you were born. Could you tell me a bit about your family?

ZIMMERMANN: I was born in Philadelphia in 1934. My father was the youngest child of a German immigrant who actually came to the United States around the 1870s. He had been in the textile business as a young man in Germany, founded a textile plant in Philadelphia and invented some kind of process for making rugs. So he was relatively successful. My father went to the University of Pennsylvania and was a wool broker. He stayed in the business, so they had a comfortable house on the main line in Haverford. My mother's father had been an ophthalmologist and dean of the University of Pennsylvania school of ophthalmology. So, I led what I guess was a conventional kind of middle class childhood. I went to private schools.

Q: Let's talk a little about your education because I think it is important as we get into these oral histories to understand where you come from. Where did you go to private school?

ZIMMERMANN: I went to a school called Haverford School which was in the town where I was brought up. It was a private boys school.

Q: Was It Quaker or not?

ZIMMERMANN: No, but there were a lot of Quaker kids in it because there was a strong Quaker influence in that area. Then for my last three years of school, I went away to a boarding school in Massachusetts called Deerfield Academy. It is in the western part of the state not far from Smith College and Amherst College.

Q: Now while you were at, particularly at Deerfield, was the famous headmaster there at that time?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the famous headmaster was there. His name was Frank Boyden. My senior year he celebrated his 50th year as headmaster of Deerfield, not just there but as headmaster of Deerfield. I was the editor-in-chief of the school paper and I wrote a long article, two page centerfold article. I had never done that before of course, about him and his equally remarkable wife and their beginnings and so forth as simple New England people.

Q: Could you talk about, because I always try to catch a little social history, talk a little bit about the educational system and your impression and what you got out of Deerfield.

ZIMMERMANN: I would say that I was extremely well educated at Deerfield. It was a no-nonsense kind of education. You were expected in English for example to know how to write a sentence and to know how to write a paragraph and understand what grammar was. Looking back I think it was the single most important thing that I brought with me into the foreign service was a clear grounding in pure expository writing. I credit Deerfield for that. It was also a school because the headmaster himself was a sports addict. He was coach of the football, basketball, and baseball teams right up into his 70s. It was a school that believed in the kind of an English tradition of combining sports with studies, so I was inclined that way, too. That has always stayed with me also.

Q: Did you get much in the way of, let's see you were there during, what, the early '50s?

ZIMMERMANN: I was there from '49 to '52.

Q: Were you getting much in the way of world events at that time?

ZIMMERMANN: We thought we were, but in fact we were amazingly innocent about what was going on in the world. I remember I took the *Herald Tribune* on a daily basis which is what you were supposed to do if you wanted to keep up with current events. Every year I would take the *Time* current affairs test.

Q: I won in my fourth foreign year.

ZIMMERMANN: I did miserably on it. I was terrible on the *Time* current affairs test, so I really didn't know much about what was going on in the world. I was going to be an English major I figured and I probably didn't need to know very much.

Q: Well, how about history?

ZIMMERMANN: I took a couple of history courses at Deerfield. American history I hated. In fact that turned out to be the reason why I failed the foreign service exam the first time around because I didn't know any American history. I had never taken a course in it at college since I had hated it so much in school. I loved European history and while I was an English major at Yale, I minored in history, took a lot of history courses. Curiously just to finish this, after I failed the foreign service exam, and the examiner said it was because I didn't know enough American history.

Q: We are talking about the oral exam.

ZIMMERMANN: We are talking about the oral exam. I went back and threw myself into a study course of American history, a home study course. Of course I immediately began to realize I loved it. I have been a history buff both American and European ever since.

Q: I have to as a footnote, I was an oral examiner at one point in the '70s and I was one of those guys, if you didn't know your American history, the hell with you.

ZIMMERMANN: Actually I think that is right. I really do think you need to know American history. I think I should have failed, and it had the right effect on me. I learned it.

Q: Well, after Deerfield, you went to Yale, is that right?

ZIMMERMANN: I did.

Q: You were at Yale from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I was at Yale from '52 to '56, which was the period of time which Yale upperclassmen when I was there referred to as the time of the silent generation. We were the silent generation. There was no war. The Korean war was wrapped up. Vietnam hadn't happened yet. We were not great rebels in any political or foreign policy sense.

Q: So you didn't have the leavening of having a lot of veterans in. I graduated in 1950 from Williams and we had a lot of in fact, the majority of the school was veterans. By that time you have sort of gone through the veterans.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, we had been through the veterans, and the big thing was getting a student deferment by staying in school as long as you could.

Q: A student deferment referred to the draft which.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. As I recall, the draft still existed, and as long as you were in school you wouldn't have to go into the military. I look back at that period as one of which I am not at all proud because looking after 40 years later, it does seem to me that if the military exists, and certainly there was the draft, people should go in. It is a good thing to do.

Q: Well, what was your concentration during that time?

ZIMMERMANN: I started off at Yale wanting very badly to make the Yale Daily News, the campus newspaper which came out every day and had been doing that since the 19th century. My freshman year I tried out for the news. It was a very prestigious thing to do, and actually won the competition among all the others who had tried out. So I became the person that was considered to be the front runner to be chairman of the news which again was enormously a high ranking kind of extra curricular job on campus. But a funny thing happened on the way to that. I realized that I absolutely loved my studies. I liked what I was doing. I liked the history courses, the English courses I was taking, and I realized that if I were to work for chairman of the news and be chairman of the news, there wouldn't be enough time to do more than scrape through with a "C" average or "B-" average or something like that. So, I just made a decision not to try out for chairman of the news. I told my father who thought that being chairman of the news was the best thing I could possibly do in college. He talked to a number of his influential friends including Juan Tripp, the president of Pan American Airways in those days. They importuned me to get

the message right and to stop all this studying stuff and get with the Yale News. But I resisted all that, so I didn't I ended up writing a column for the news, but the chairmanship went to somebody else. I don't regret it for a minute because it really gave me a kind of intellectual excitement to sample a lot of the wares that Yale had to offer.

Q: What were some of the courses, subjects that particularly got you?

ZIMMERMANN: I loved the introductory course on European history. It was called History 10, and it started with feudal times and went right up to the present. We had a casebook where we actually read documents. I had never done that before. It was a lot of fun; it was brilliantly taught by two teachers who had actually devised the course. I had the thrill of actually teaching that course five or six years later when I came back to Yale for one year to teach, I taught as a section person as a teaching assistant in History 10 which was also fun. That, to me, was the most interesting course. I would say also I very much liked a course in Chinese history taught by a man named Richard Walker who ultimately became Ambassador under the Republicans to South Korea.

Q: Is this Dixie Walker?

ZIMMERMANN: Dixie Walker, yes. He was a very exciting and dramatic teacher, and he made Chinese history come alive.

Q: Did, this is obviously jumping way ahead, but did you find you had reference back to your history courses and all those during your foreign service career?

ZIMMERMANN: I wouldn't say specifically no, but what Yale did for me was to kindle a love of reading history which I have never dropped to this day. So I kept kind of renewing the subject matter of whatever it was. When I knew I was going to be sent to a particular country or I was going to deal with a particular problem, I always began the approach to that problem by reading as much history as I could to try to set the problem in some kind of a historical context. It was something that now that I am teaching I tell my students to do as well because I really thing unless you understand the historical context, you are not going to be able to understand the problem.

Q: Absolutely, Yugoslavia probably being the prime example of the world having to take a quick course in Serbian history.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. If you don't know Serbian history, you are not going to understand what is going on.

Q: Yes. Well, you graduated in 1956. Then what?

ZIMMERMANN: I tried out for a Rhodes scholarship, and I missed that. I got a Fulbright scholarship to Cambridge University, and I did two year at Kings College, Cambridge.

Q: What were you doing at...

ZIMMERMANN: There I switched to history. I had been an English major at Yale. I switched to history, European history at Cambridge. That was wonderful That was a very loose curriculum. You didn't have to go to very many lectures. You could pick and choose what you wanted to do. I just read voluminously. I spent most of my time in my room reading books. I read 2, 3, 4000 pages a week.

Q: What sort of history were you working on? You say European history, any particular...

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Well, a lot of it was English history because that is what the curriculum consisted of. But I would say mainly anything from the 16th century up forward. I belonged to a little political club in Kings College where you could write a paper for the club if you wanted to, and I took almost a whole term off and wrote a paper on pre-revolutionary Russia. The subject was Russia's agricultural revolutions. First the one that happened just before WWI, and then the second one during the 1920s when the new economic policy created, or tried to create incentives for agriculture, for farmers to produce. I tried to link all of that with the politics of the time. It was a fascinating subject. It turned out to be a very, to me a very exciting paper to write. It went over very well with my colleagues in the political society.

Q: Were you getting any glimmerings of foreign policy etc. at this point?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, a lot more in England because the British, of course, are very policy oriented. You had to have an opinion on everything, and we would sit in the King's college dining room with pictures of Robert Walpole and John Maynard Keynes and other distinguished Kings alumni looking down on us. You had to have an opinion on everything. Whatever had happened in that days news, you had to have a view on it. It wasn't enough just to know what happened, you had to have an opinion, so, it was actually very good I think, despite the fact that most of the opinions were absolutely crazy.

Q: At the time, something that has always interested me, you were sort of in the belly of the beast, this Oxbridge environment, in reading and just what one gets from the news media and all, the British seemed to have their graduates do seem to be particularly facile in opinions, speaking well, and all. Did you feel there is I mean much substance behind this. Because I always think of the American undergraduate whom I don't feel that is terribly well educated. I was just wondering what you thought of the British system?

ZIMMERMANN: I thought about that a lot actually, having had the advantage of doing similar degrees at both Yale and Cambridge. I would have said that if anything Yale was slightly better university than Cambridge in the sense that the emphasis was much more on substance. Kids were made to work harder, had many more exams. At Cambridge you had exams only at the end of the year. At Oxford you had exams only at the end of your

last year. So, there was a lot of time that you could have just screwed around and goofed off during all that period in England. Indeed one of the purposes of going up to university as they say in England was to make friends and contacts, not necessarily to study. That was not the view that the Yale professors took toward the undergraduates. They expected you to do serious work and they checked you through papers and tests quite often to make sure you did it. What Cambridge gave you I think was a lot of time to reflect. If you get interested in something, a lot of time to dig deeply into it and pursue it. There was, as you implied, much more in England of a sense of style. That how you phrase something is probably more important than what it is you are saying. That could be carried sometimes to ludicrous lengths. I mean you could hear the most preposterous views expressed in the most elegant English. That was considered to pass. Whereas, I think in an American university, which probably didn't put enough emphasis on style, nevertheless the substance was I considered to be important.

Q: Because it seems in the field of diplomacy that two things Americans come up against. One is the British, some of the British have characterized as the chattering class, but well phrased things where often the Americans feel somewhat awkward, and then of course, there is the French intellectual group which is almost a breed apart. These are two ones where I think the American system, particularly as diplomats, we clash with these from time to time.

ZIMMERMANN: I think that's true. Then if you add the power aspect of it. I mean the United States being much more powerful than either Britain or France or Britain and France put together, you see the natural clashes with the French who have never really admitted that they don't have the powerful state that they used to have but have lost none of the arrogance and none of the self assurance. So, I mean you had a natural clash between the United States and France personified of course, by De Gaulle and some of his successors. With the British I think it was more subtle. There was a degree of arrogance, I think, in British diplomacy, but the British also were smart enough to understand that if they could harness their intelligence to American power, they could serve their interests in a maximal way. It was a kind of Macmillan I think, used the phrase being Greece to America's Rome. I think that is very much the way the British did it, and they did it with extremely good ability.

Q: Well then you were through with Cambridge in '58 about.

ZIMMERMANN: I finished Cambridge in '58. I was offered a thing called a Carnegie teaching fellowship at Yale, so I went back and taught for a year at Yale in this history course that I had taken as an undergraduate. The idea of the fellowship was to persuade people, there were eight of us I think. Most of my colleagues had just graduated from Yale, but I was a little older than they were. The idea was to persuade people to go into teaching by giving them a taste of teaching before they had gone on to take a higher degree. I think I was the only one of the eight that chose not to go on to get a Ph.D. I remember feeling at the time that I had been in the academic life of course all my life and I didn't know what the real world was. Of course now that I look back on it I understand

that the real world is as real in academia as anywhere else. But I didn't know that; I hadn't done anything else. So I got a very strong desire to go to Washington. I wasn't quite sure to do what but I knew it had to with something having to do with foreign policy or international affairs or something of that sort. The obvious choices were journalism or the foreign service. I started as a journalist. I actually spent six months in the army. The army offered a program in those days of six months of active duty followed by reserve duty. I did that, so I got to Washington about the early part of 1959. Would that be right? No, 1960. I had a job as a reporter for a thing called the Monroe News Bureau, which actually consisted of three people. There was Pat Monroe who was in his 40s then. He was an established journalist and had a number of newspapers in the Midwest and West that he acted as Washington correspondent for. He had two 23-year-olds, me and a guy named Gordon White. We were sort of the leg people who would go out and try to drum up the stories to send off to these newspapers.

Q: Any particular focus?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, it was whatever the readers were interested in that was coming out of Washington. There tended to be a lot of emphasis on agricultural issues because one of our papers was in Nebraska, and one was in Utah, and one was in New Mexico. I learned a lot more about wheat futures and soybeans than I wanted to know. Also all of these states were major defense contractors so what the Defense Department was doing and what particular weapons programs, what was happening with them was very important. The Minuteman for example, was just beginning.

Q: Minuteman being a missile. Was it intercontinental?

ZIMMERMANN: A missile and it was intercontinental. It was being partly built in Utah, so the Salt Lake paper was very interested in that. It was very good training. I think what I got the most out of was getting to understand how the Congress works because most of our sources were in the Congress and the Congressional delegations of these states.

Q: How did you work it? Did you I mean really go into the Congressional staff. Was this...

ZIMMERMANN: A typical day was you would get there; you would read all the major papers. Pat Monroe was very smart about that. He expected you to know all the news that had happened the day before. So we would read whatever papers we hadn't read at home we would read in the office. Then we would just make the rounds of the Congressional offices asking questions about particular issues or just asking if they had any stories for us. Sometimes they would. Then we would go back; we'd take the trolley. Then the trolley was abolished in Washington and we would take the bus.

Q: It went to Sarajevo instead.

ZIMMERMANN: It went to Sarajevo instead, that's right.

Q: They took the trolley cars to Sarajevo.

ZIMMERMANN: We saw them there in the '60s. Then we would go back; we would take the bust back to the office which was in the National Press Building 14 blocks from the Congress and write up the stories and send them by Western Union. That was how you did it in those days.

Q: Well, did you get any feel for the Congressional staffs and their role at that particular time. I think it has changed over the years.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, you did. In those days, the early '60s, the Congressional staffs were small. A Congressman would have an administrative assistant and a legislative assistant. Those would be the only two substantive people that a Congressman would have. Now they have beves of people, interns or whatever who concentrate on all kinds of different issues. Senate staffs are even larger, and the committee staffs are larger. Congress was a much quieter place in those days. It was much more orderly and disciplined. Lyndon Johnson was the Senate majority leader. He really ran things. Sam Rayburn was the Speaker of the House, and he really ran things. You didn't have the sense of instability or indiscipline or a feeling that there was no leadership and there was a kind of a rudderless. You didn't have a feeling of rudderlessness which I think you get now.

Q: What about the press corps? I mean although you were off to one side, you were in the press building and were obviously rubbing against them. What was your impression of the Washington Press corps?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I was about as junior as you could be. None of the famous reporters would pay any attention to me. My wife had an uncle who was a well known columnist, Joseph Alsop. He was a man of very flamboyant behavior and had a very intimidating presence. He was quite intimidating to me I think partly because in those days I was not very sure of myself and he felt that I wasn't keeping up with the high standards of journalism which he himself had set. So I found there was a kind of a star system in print journalism in those days. Less so in television journalism which hadn't gotten as important. But you had three great columnists. You had Alsop, you had Walter Lippmann, you had James Restin. They were extremely famous. They were the subject themselves of cover stories in places like *Time* and *Newsweek*. Of course they had the kind of access that none of the little people like me could possibly hope to have. This was just the period when McCarthy was being, when the press finally went out after McCarthy and attacked him. I would say that the one difference between the press then and the press now is that a politician's personal life was definitely off limits. Kennedy was a Senator then he became President. Everybody knew about his affairs. It never appeared in the press. There were many others of this sort as well that were just never written up. Nowadays that wouldn't happen; I think lamentably. I think we have, we are into the

business of destroying public figures by too much scrutiny of aspects of their lives which really don't affect their ability to do their work.

Q: Were you getting any contact with the Department of State at this time? I know you mentioned you took the foreign service exam at one point.

ZIMMERMANN: I did. As a journalist I had very little contact with the Department of state except when there was an issue we were interested in. For example, for some reason we were very interested in sugar quotas from Cuba. It must have been because Utah produces sugar or Nebraska. Whatever it was, we would occasionally go to briefings at the State Department on sugar issues, but I never went that I can remember not more than once or twice to the regular State Department briefings or regular White House briefings. So I was not really focusing on foreign policy as a journalist.

Q: When did you take the foreign service exam?

ZIMMERMANN: I took the foreign service exam during that first year I was in Washington and passed the written and failed the oral. They asked me, I can remember the question that absolutely got me. They asked me how I would get from the largest iron ore shipping port in the United States to Baltimore by water. I didn't, first of all I didn't know about the Massabe range, and secondly I had no idea how you get through the Great Lakes, so I totally spaced out on that question.

Q: Did you take it again?

ZIMMERMANN: I did, and when they told me I had failed, it was a very nice kind of elder gentleman who was chairman of the board, and I of course, had expected to pass. There was a kind of arrogance.

Q: I have to say that I used to tell people this, and one of the hard things was we had a lot of, almost everybody who passed the written and took the oral exam essentially had been winners in college. You know, they had always done well and really somebody had never said no.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, well that was certainly the case with me. I remember going home to my wife who also expected me to pass, and she was first of all incredulous. Then she realized she had a major problem with my disappointment to deal with. Anyway, the head of the examining panel was very nice. He said, "Learn some American history and come back and take the exam again because, you know, you are one of the people we think could be in the foreign service." I did do that. I took it the next year. I took the oral being ready to answer a thousand questions on American history, and of course, they never asked me one. They figured I had done what I needed to do on that. It was actually very easy, and I got through okay.

Q: On the personal side, when did you get married? Could you tell me a little about your wife?

ZIMMERMANN: Okay. I got married to Tini in 1959 which was the year I got back from England. I had known her brother. Her name was Tini Chubb. He has the unlikely name of Percy Chubb. He was a classmate of mine at Yale and a friend. When I got back I was invited... Tini's parents lived in a rather Victorian way in Northern New Jersey. I was invited for a weekend there ostensibly by my friend Percy, but really it was a ruse to get me to meet Tini. I started to court her. We went to an opera or two at the Metropolitan because I like opera. I thought she did. She deceived me. She said, "I love opera." So we would sit through Boris Gouidinov and other long operas, and she would say how wonderful they were. I discovered later that this was just a ruse. She didn't like opera at all. After we were married she said she would never go to another opera. She now after nearly 40 years of marriage has decided she likes it, so we again go to the opera together. She had had a kind of an unsettled life. She had been engaged once before. She had broken the engagement just before the invitations for the wedding went out, i.e., at the last minute. She had been to Smith. She hadn't liked Smith and dropped out. She was at Barnard when I met her. She was in her senior year at Barnard, but she was bored with studying and was not getting very far on her senior paper. So she devised the idea to, she liked skiing, to rent a ski house in Vermont. It turned out that she got nine other partners to share the cost of the ski house. It was \$600 for the winter. Each partner was hit up for \$60. One of the partners was her brother Percy, and the others were all eligible men of which I was one. We would go up. I was teaching in New Haven then, and we would go up driving nine hours. Tini would come up on the train from New York to New Haven. I would meet her at the New Haven station. We would get in the car and drive nine hours. This was a Friday.

Q: Where in Vermont?

ZIMMERMANN: It was in northern Vermont. It was a place called Mad River which was and is a good kind of New England ski area. We would ski all day. We would get up about midnight to this place, horrible cold house that we had rented, and we would ski all day Saturday. We would all day Sunday. We would get in the car about 4:00 Sunday night and drive back down to New Haven, and I would put her on the train to New York. This was our idea of fun, to do what amounted to about 20 hours of driving for the weekend, no sleep, and go skiing. Anyway at the end of this winter Tini and I got married. We got married on April 18 of that ski season. Then I went almost directly into the army for six months, and then she came down to Washington with me. We have been together ever since in all, of course, the foreign service posts.

Q: Well now when you took the foreign service exam the second time, what was your impression maybe you were getting from Tini's uncle, Joseph Alsop and others, of the foreign service before you went in?

ZIMMERMANN: His advice to me, and that of his brother Stuart who was also a journalist was go in the foreign service. Don't go into journalism because journalists have to work too hard and they are dealing with too many important problems. It was kind of negative advice. What I took them to say was if you want to be a serious dilettante, go into the foreign service. Don't go into journalism like us. I kind of resented that advice. So, I was a little bit, I suppose hesitant about the foreign service and what life would be like. Would it be just pouring tea or would you get involved in more serious things. So when I finally got in, I made a point of applying for assignment to an underdeveloped country. I did not want the stigma of going to a place like London or Paris. When we finished our introductory class and got our assignments, and they read them out to us. I had been assigned to Venice, which was exactly what I didn't want. So I went home to Tini and I said, "Terrible news. I have been assigned to Venice." She said, "What do you mean terrible news. That is wonderful news. You have to go where you are assigned, so we will go to Venice." As it turned out the post was closed, so we never got there. It all came up again. Then they did one. They did try to assign me to Paris, and I did fight it. I said, "Surely you can find plenty of people to go to Paris. I don't want to go there. I want to go to some more obscure place." So they ended up assigning us to Venezuela, to Caracas. This was 1962. It is not precisely an underdeveloped country because it had all that oil money, but it certainly was exciting.

Q: I want to go back before we get to that. I would like to go back to your impressions of you came into the foreign service what in 1960?

ZIMMERMANN: 1961.

Q: '61. What was your impression of the foreign service, we will call it the A-100 course, the basic foreign service course, sort of the composition of the people and how you looked at it. Because we are talking about having arrived, I mean Kennedy has just been inaugurated and he is asking ask no what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country. I mean things really were sparking then weren't they? Did you feel so?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I mean, there was really I think a great esprit among the young people coming in to serve. You know, to do things that would help people. I had the feeling that the structure of the foreign service was not accommodating to that very well, I mean the older people there who came in to talk to our A-100 class were not all communicating that excitement that we had, although some were. The best ones, as I recall, who came to talk to us had been involved in eastern Europe and really could tell you what it was like to be in communist countries and so forth. There was some excitement in that. For the rest of it, I think the A-100 course was actually quite good in giving you a sense of the psychology of other cultures. They put a great deal of emphasis on that. I don't know if they did when you were doing it. They had some very interesting cultural psychologists. There was a fellow named Jim Bostain who came and lectured to us for hours and hours. A killingly funny man. Marvelous kind of lecture, but he ended up

getting you to see the degree to which cultural differences really make a difference in how different countries act and how they perceive things.

Q: What was the composition of your A-100 course in terms of people?

ZIMMERMANN: All men. I don't think we had a single woman. We didn't. We didn't have a single woman. It was all white men. I am trying to remember what the backgrounds were. It was certainly eclectic. It was not Ivy League dominated at all. People from all over the country. One of them, one of the youngest had actually been a state legislator in Kansas. One had been a Navy flier. There were a couple of economists, one of whom got very far in the foreign service, Paul Volker. I saw them as people not many of whom had much foreign policy experience. I expect people coming in today would have more although I am not sure about that. Not a lot of foreign policy experience but they had a strong geographical distribution. They did not have the kind of ethnic distribution which would be required and which ought to have been more emphasized then too.

Q: Well then you went to Venezuela where you served from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I served in Caracas from January, '62 until the middle of '64.

Q: What was the situation in Venezuela when you got there sort of political-economic?

ZIMMERMANN: It was in great turmoil. You had just had the election of a democratic government, so-called democratic government, quasi democratic government following the overthrow of the dictator who had been a military dictator. The army was still a major factor in the power balance and was always in danger of staging a coup d'état. There was a very strong leftist element both in politics and in parts of the military supported by Castro. So, you have the democratic government being challenged both from the right by the military and from the left by the Marxists. It made for a very unstable situation. The second week I was there in Caracas, the embassy was blown up by a bomb which had been planted by a shadowy organization called the armed forces of national liberation who turned out to be leftist and definitely supported by Castro. The CIA was able to prove that. They did, during the time I was there, the 2 ½ years I was there, they hijacked a ship. They hijacked a plane. They hijacked a train. They stole five great masters from a French art exhibit playing in Caracas. They kidnaped one of the most famous soccer players in the world who was playing an exhibition game there. These were people who were very skillful at publicity making events. And remember, this is the early 1960s. This is before people were doing this very much if at all in the world. They were a constant headache for everybody. Ultimately when they began to lose power, then they started killing people, then you got assassination squads and terrorist bombs and so forth, kind of the more familiar elements of terrorism. Oh, I forgot to say, they kidnaped the American assistant army attaché and held him for two weeks incommunicado. I mean two weeks doesn't seem like a long time when you have been through all these hostages who have been held much longer, but for those days this was an unprecedented kind of thing.

Q: In the first place what were you doing at the embassy and how did you find it was responding, because this is all pretty new and ARA had not had to deal with this sort of thing as much?

ZIMMERMANN: We had a very good ambassador in Caracas, a man named Alan Stuart, who had been for a long time an AP correspondent in South America. I think actually in Venezuela. He somehow got into the foreign service as a somewhat late age. He was deputy chief of mission when Kennedy came though in 1961. Kennedy liked him so much that he was promoted to ambassador when the sitting ambassador left his job. The only example of that I know in foreign service history, a promotion from number two to number one. Stuart knew everybody in the power structure. He spoke very good Spanish. He had a kind of a Latin approach to everything. He was a great figure. He taught us all of the younger officers. By the way, we had a very good crop of younger officers I would say in Caracas. All of them were very dedicated. Stuart was a good role model, I think, in teaching us the degree to which you really have to get to know the country to be able to function well. So, he did not lose his cool. He did not panic; he did not call in the American air force or anything, and actually the democratically elected government managed to survive, and to pass on its, the reigns of power to a second democratically elected government. Venezuela has not looked back. Whatever else you say about it, it has had one succession of democratically elected governments after another since the time that I was there. That was a good example I think, of American foreign policy not overreacting, but doing the right thing. We had an enormous AID program. The Alliance for Progress had just started under Kennedy. We had an enormous AID program in Venezuela. We had various private organizations who were doing community action things, and I think they all made something of a difference. I think they were a positive element.

Q: Well, it sounds like you were in an embassy which was much more responsive because on had ARA the Latin American bureau had the reputation of not being as, being a bit hidebound or not. But you didn't get that feeling?

ZIMMERMANN: No. I am aware of what you are saying, and of course, in Central America we were supporting all kinds of terrible dictatorships. The Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua and the military dictatorship in Guatemala and so forth. I don't think Kennedy had too much, I don't think Kennedy made much of a dent in that sort of structure. In the rest of Latin America I expect we had Ambassadors, many of them... We had many political ambassadors. We were lucky in Venezuela; I think it was an untypical embassy in that sense.

Q: What type of work were you doing there?

ZIMMERMANN: I started off doing consular work, which man, of course, people of my age did. I did visas for a year which was boring but at least you got to use your Spanish, so that was useful. Then I did one of the most fascinating things I have ever done. I did what is called protection and welfare, basically taking care of problems of American

citizens. The problems of American citizens in Venezuela were enormous because all kinds of people who should never travel ended up in Venezuela because it was close enough that you could get there easily. We had an extraordinary procession of crazy people, alcoholics, potential suicides and so forth. They would end up in the lap of this young and very inexperienced consular officer.

Q: Can you think, almost all of us have gone through this procedure. Do you have any consular stories because I think it gives a little flavor sometimes.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I got a call from a guy who was at the hotel Tominaco which in those days was the best hotel in Caracas. He said, "I am about to slit my wrists. Would you please get over here." Of course I did get over there. The door of his room was open, but his bathroom door was locked. He was in the bathroom. So I had to talk to him through the bathroom door. I had to talk him out of slitting his wrists, which after about 20 minutes I did. Maybe he didn't need the talk; he just needed to know that somebody was there. Anyway he unlocked the door. He came out. I said, "I think you should be checked into a hospital," so we checked him into a hospital. He thanked me very much. Two weeks later I got a telephone call from him. He said, "I am back at the Hotel Tominaco. I would like to invite you to come have a drink with me. You saved my life and I just want to thank you." So I did. I went over and we drank rum punches together and he seemed perfectly normal. I guess whatever it was that was getting at him had gone away, and he was back in the land of the living. That was a fun thing to do. We had a terrible situation which made all the front pages of the Caracas papers for weeks of a politician from New York State, Long Island, who was visiting his son who was an American businessman in Caracas. He and his wife got in a taxi, the older man and his wife got in a taxi and were taken out to a remote part of Caracas and were killed. He was killed outright and she died later. It caused all kinds of publicity because these were tourists and Caracas was trying to develop its tourist industry and so forth, and it was just wanton killing. There was political interest because these people knew Governor Harriman and so we were getting calls from his office about it. There was not much to be done. They caught the murderer, and he was tried and convicted and sentenced to eight years in jail for the murder of two American tourists. I recall writing a cable back reporting this to Washington saying if he has normal life expectancy, he can commit four more murders at this jail sentence before he dies. But that was my first experience with going through all of the sordid elements of death. The publicity hounds among the local newspaper people, the undertakers who were trying to make a buck out of the grief of this family and so forth. It was more than any other job I have had in the foreign service, and I'll bet you have had this experience and almost anybody else who has done this kind of work, it put me closer to raw and human reality than anything.

Q: Well did, how did you find Venezuelan, society is the wrong term. I don't mean it in the fancy term; I mean it in the straight term. As a young diplomat you are supposed to get out and around, mix and mingle and you know, get a feel for this. How did you find that?

ZIMMERMANN: I'll answer that question with a story. Of course we were very eager young foreign service couple. Tini already knew some Spanish. I had learned it at the Foreign Service Institute. I did very well in the Spanish course. I felt I could talk to anybody. Of course the thing we wanted to do more than anything was get to know the people, and we made real efforts to do that. I took a lot of trips to different parts of the country to do political analysis and called on politicians and so forth. We were trying desperately to make Venezuelan friends. I recall that we had a party to celebrate our third wedding anniversary. We invited every Venezuelan that we had met, and the guest list was over 100 people. We got three guests, and none of them was Venezuelan. That was very typical of the experience of all Americans in Venezuela at least in those days. The reason was not because there was a lack of contact between Americans and Venezuelans; it was because there was too much. The economic ties were so close because of the big American oil companies, Standard Oil, Gulf and so forth, were so powerful and so resented by Venezuelans that I think Venezuelans figured we have to deal with the Americans at work. We can't avoid dealing with them, but as far as we are concerned, we don't want to see them socially, we don't want to see them at night; we don't want to see them at times that we could spend with our families or our mistresses or whatever. We just don't want to see them. We don't want to know them; we don't want to get to know them, and that was it. We were there nearly three years, and I cannot say we ever had a Venezuelan friend, not for not trying.

Q: That is interesting. What about Venezuelan students? You were involved in visas but other times. I mean was the Venezuelan intellectual class, ruling class were they planning to get their kids an American education or not?

ZIMMERMANN: A lot of Venezuelan kids would go not to the really good universities but they would go to military schools in the southern United States. There was a big push for that. I can remember giving all kinds of visas for that. In fact a typical story would be an a young American woman would come into my office all distraught and in tears. The story was almost always the same. She had met this handsome Venezuelan boy who was going to a military academy in Baton Rouge or Little Rock or somewhere, and he had swept her off her feet. They had gotten married. They came back to Venezuela, and she was treated like a housemaid. She was given no rights. She had to take care of the children. She wasn't taken out at all. He didn't buy her any clothes. She had no access to money. It was just a typical story. I think the contact, this was kind of a nouveau riche society in Venezuela in those days. The rich people would go to Miami to shop and would send their children to military schools, but you didn't have the sense of any intellectual affinities. Except for fine arts where Venezuelans were very good, there wasn't the rich literary tradition for example, that you had in Colombia and other parts of Latin America. It was a society that did not grasp onto the best parts of American intellectual life. It had very little interest in those.

Q: What was the attitude towards the left at that time from the embassy point of view? Were we able to differentiate between lefts or were they pretty much the enemy?

ZIMMERMANN: They were pretty much the enemy. We were very strongly anti Marxist. Of course we were consumed by our opposition to Castro, and Castro was very heavily involved in supporting the Venezuelan left or at least some of it.

Q: Castro is quite new at this time.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. Remember you had had the Bay of Pigs already and the Cuban missile crisis happened in October of '62 when we were there. We had been there nearly a year then. So there was a kind of an obsession with Cuba. This was Castro's chosen target for overthrowing what he called a bourgeois democracy in Latin America. He felt he had a good chance to do it and was putting a lot of resources into it mainly by sending arms.

Q: Were you there when they got that particularly large arms shipment?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes I was. The CIA jumped into action, did traces on all the weapons.

Q: This was a ship or something wasn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes it was a ship that left arms on the beach, on a remote beach. The arms were found and turned over to the Venezuelan police or the Venezuelan army. Then the CIA sent its experts down to find out where the arms came from. They were able to prove that they came from Castro. That was used as an enormous campaign by the Kennedy administration through the CIA to brief all the leaders of Latin America about what Castro was doing in Venezuela. I mean the idea being this is what Castro does. He sends arms to overthrow legitimate governments. So it didn't play just in Venezuela, it played in throughout the hemisphere. But I would say we were pretty anti left in general. Now it is true that the President of Venezuela in those days, Romano Betancour had been a left wing politician under the previous military dictatorship. So I think you would probably find the argument from the Kennedy administration that we were supporting a kind of a social democratic left. That was okay, but not a revolutionary left.

Q: How did the Bay of Pigs, not the Bay of Pigs but the missile crisis affect you there because you were very close to, you know if the war was going to start, I mean it wasn't too far away and all that. What was the embassy reaction?

ZIMMERMANN: We were all told Kennedy was speaking, it was in the evening as I recall. We were all told to be at our radios listening. As I recall I was at the house of a foreign service colleague. There were seven or eight of us who were listening to the speech. I thought we were going to go to war. I mean I really felt that this might be it.

Q: We are not talking about against Cuba, we are talking about the Soviet Union.

ZIMMERMANN: Against the Soviet Union, but you know there was a certain feeling that we would take out Cuba and Venezuela was close enough to Cuba. You know I recall

a feeling of enormous intimacy or immediacy with regard to that. I mean that was the first reaction. The second reaction was we have got to close ranks behind the President. This is serious. We have got to button the lip and tow the line and stop the right things.

Q: You mentioned that when you first arrived the embassy was bombed. Was that while you were in the embassy?

ZIMMERMANN: I was in the embassy, yes. I was interviewing an Italian visa applicant. The most enormously loud explosion happened just like a clap of cosmic thunder. I remember saying to myself, I better get under the desk. Then I realized I already was. He was too. We were both under the desk. Then the embassy was immediately evacuated. Then the younger officers were assigned, then a call came through that there was a second bomb, so the younger officers were assigned to look for it. We went through every room in the embassy looking for a bomb. It was amazing how many things you can produce that look like bombs, that you think might be a bomb, but there wasn't a second bomb.

Q: With these kidnappings and bombs and all that, were you under any constraints during this time?

ZIMMERMANN: It is amazing how few rules there were about our security. Here, you know, an embassy official was being kidnaped. Tini and I actually thought we had discovered the place where he was kidnaped. One of the places he had been taken. He was taken to a couple of places. They moved him. We lived on a hillside in a newly built area of Caracas. Caracas is in a valley surrounded by mountains on all sides, so it is very easy to live on a hillside. There was a house that we could see from our front porch. It was to the left but down the hill a little so you could see into the backyard of that house and then it sloped down the mountain. There was some very unusual activity going on. I don't remember exactly what it was, but it was, the house had been deserted. There had been nobody in the house for the first couple of months we were in our house. Then all of a sudden there was a lot of activity going on. So I reported it to the security officer. Oh and then Tini was wheeling a baby carriage with our smallest child in it in the vicinity of that house. She came across an armed guard who told her not to go any farther. He wasn't in a military uniform. He wasn't in uniform at all, but he had a submachine gun. So obviously she told me about that. I reported this. And it turned out, then our security people reported to the Venezuelan police and so forth. Ultimately the guy was released quite soon after that and when he was debriefed, he was blindfolded the whole time so he wasn't exactly sure where he was. But it sounded as if one of the places he had been taken was that house. It fit some of the geographic coordinates that would make it that house. But during this whole thing I can't remember anybody giving us any advice about security or staying home or whatever. Of course in those days embassies were not built to withstand explosives. The American embassy was a beautiful building recently designed and built by a wonderful architect whose name I forget. It had a lot of light flimsy pieces of metal on the whole front facade which would kind of glint in the sun and different shades and so forth, but there was nothing to them at all. Of course the bomb which was put in the top floor bathroom tore right through them as if they weren't there at all.

Fortunately the force of the blast was out not in. Otherwise people would have been killed or hurt.

Q: Well did the ambassador sort of keep his staff relatively well informed about what he thought about what was happening in Venezuela but also about you know, with the Kennedy administration?

ZIMMERMANN: No. We never saw the ambassador. The ambassador was really with his contacts. I can't recall ever receiving a briefing by him. Certainly there was no sense of a need to keep the younger officers informed. The deputy chief of mission did do some of that and actually made a point which I never have forgotten, of inviting every officer in the embassy singly for dinner. He would just go right through the list. He wouldn't have them all together; he had them one at a time. His name was John Calvin Hill. He was a real cold warrior. He had been involved in the overthrow of the so called leftist regime in Guatemala in 1954. But he was a kind of an archetypal swashbuckling pro consular hard thinking type, but the sort of person that young foreign service officers would admire because he was not in the mold of the cookie pushers.

Q: Well you left there in what, '64?

ZIMMERMANN: We left there in '64 to study Serbo-Croatian.

Q: While you were there you developed a desire to concentrate on Latin American affairs or did you want to get out and around or what?

ZIMMERMANN: I was really interested in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe. That had been my concentration of interest academically. While we were in Caracas we had some friends a couple named George and Meg Gabriel. Meg's brother was a foreign service officer slightly older than me, Bob DeVecci. Bob came through to stay with his sister and he had just served in Poland. He said the most exciting places to serve in the foreign service if you have any interest in Europe were Poland and Yugoslavia. He said you really ought to apply to one of those places. Bob has since left the foreign service. He is now the president of the international rescue committee which is I think the most effective private refugee organization in the United States. So, I put down on my application list Poland and Yugoslavia, and it came up Yugoslavia.

Q: Well you came back for Serbian. I would like to talk a little about the Serbian training because it's a pretty good introduction. By the way I know the, people reading this should know we talk about Serbian because that is what you learn. I mean it was called Serbo-Croatian, but there wasn't any nonsense about...

ZIMMERMANN: Well there were not Croats in the course that I took. They were real Serbs.

Q: Oh boy. So you took Serbian from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I took it from the summer of '64 to the summer of '65.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the teaching of the language and what you got from the teachers.

ZIMMERMANN: Well my teachers were undoubtedly the same as yours. Two elderly Serb émigrés who were in their own way central casting Serbs, particularly Dryden Propovich, who had been an officer in the Royal Yugoslav Army and fled Yugoslavia because of his hatred of Tito. He was not by vocation, avocation interest or profession really, a teacher. I mean he was a military officer; he was a politician; he was anything but a teacher. I had the feeling that nothing bored him more than teaching. What he really wanted to do was inculcate into his captive audience all of the Serb values. Of course this was fascinating.

Q: In many ways I found that most, the greatest thing we got out of it something which I am sure both of us are using today to judge where these people came from.

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely right. You got a real understanding of how a real Serb thinks, and he was a Serb nationalist. I didn't know it at the time. I mean I didn't use those categories, but he definitely was. Spending day in and day out with a man whose mind works in that way really did give you a fantastic insight into the way real Serbs think. You don't really get that insight if you don't have that amount of exposure. The other teacher who was his brother-in-law was Yanko Yakovich, a very gentle man. He probably also was a Serbian nationalist, but he was too polite to talk about it very much. One had the sense that again, he didn't much enjoy teaching. I had the experience sometimes of watching him fall asleep while he was talking in class, but he was an exceptionally nice man. The two of them would occasionally invite us around...

Q: They were brothers-in-law.

ZIMMERMANN: They were brothers-in-law, yes; they were married to sisters. The class would be invited to a Serbian meal which was fascinating of course and very interesting. So, by the time I got to Belgrade I had a real sense of the environment already from them. I can't argue they were good language teachers because they really weren't.

Q: They weren't, no. In fact, when I was there, we had a revolt because when we started '61-'62 you only had one teacher and you didn't switch at all. Finally I think Larry Eagleburger led the charge and we went and complained and said, "Come on, let's have a little mixing up here." Nine or ten months of Dragon Propovich was just a little much, so we did get a switch much to Mr. Propovich's annoyance. Well, when you went out to Yugoslavia, you had done the requisite reading I suppose, Black Lion and Gray Falcon and all that. What did you think you were getting into and what were you picking up from the corridors and whatever briefings one got before one went out there?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I mean I had the feeling that Yugoslavia was a relatively important concern for the United States. After all George Kennan had been the ambassador there. And the Ambassador there when you and I were there was a very senior foreign service officer that has already been ambassador to Portugal which was an important country because we have a base there.

Q: Burke Elbrick.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, Burke Elbrick. So, I must say I didn't think in those days in terms of power and influence and is this the right career choice and so forth. I was so fascinated with what I had read about the country, and it was kind of on the crossroads between Europe and Asia and between the Turkish influence and the western European influence. I just was ready to soak myself up in it. In those days I didn't think so much about American policy. I realized having been in the foreign service for as long as I was that you have to really look at everything from the point of view of U.S. interests and U.S. policy. I was not that focused in those days on what American interests were and what American policy was. I was just in it for the experience of dealing with the country which had a fascinating history and for all intents and purposes very interesting people. So, once I got there, there were things I would automatically have thought of if I were older and never thought of at all. For example, when a young dissident named Mihilo was arrested for publishing a long article which was critical of Soviet treatment of dissidents, when he was arrested by Tito's government, it never occurred to me to recommend to our ambassador that he ought to complain about that. It was an outrageous thing for them to do. I never thought of it as a policy issue. So really, what I wanted to do was convey, I could convey American policy to the Yugoslavs. That was fine, I was good at that although I got less good as the Vietnam war became increasingly meaningless to me. But I could do that and learn about the country. Because I thought in those days that the most important thing a foreign service officer could do is become an expert on the country. I wasn't really thinking about what the expertise should be used for.

Q: In the first place what were you doing; you were there '65-'68. What were you doing there during those three years, and then could we talk about the situation in Yugoslavia at that time.

ZIMMERMANN: What I did, the first I guess it was whole year, I was primarily in charge of a thing called the joint translation service which was a daily bulletin put out by the American and British embassies jointly that was an English language digest of the Yugoslav press. We had seven or eight Yugoslav translators who would work under my direct supervision to put out this digest. I had to go over it; I had to edit it. I had to make sure that the English was legible. That was all you could do. You could never put it into good English, you could just make sure that it was understandable, and helped to choose the articles to translate. Then we sold it to other embassies or to businesses, anybody who needed an English language digest of the press. So, we didn't make any money but we also used it ourselves. Ultimately it was abolished I think by Ambassador Malcolm Tune when he got there on the grounds that you should know how to read Serb-Croatian so you

shouldn't need this. We didn't have this in Moscow. There wasn't anybody who could argue with that, so it was ultimately abolished, but it was what I did for the first year. It was primarily interesting to me, it actually wasn't interesting, but to the degree there was some interest because again I was dealing with the personalities of the translators who were a kind of rainbow of different psychological modes. All of them, I think, were Serbs, but there were all kinds of different Serbs, and watching their own interactions which were sometimes extremely bizarre was quite an interesting experience for me.

Q: What did you think of the communist prose? This is the first time, maybe this is not the first time you were up against it.

ZIMMERMANN: It was the first time. The communist prose was weird. It wasn't Soviet prose which was different because there was very little reference to Lenin or Marx. The Yugoslavs had invented their own jargon which was just as impenetrable and which was so meaningless that it was very difficult to figure out what was going. Even when you were trying to read and understand philosophers who were writing anti regime prose, they did it in such a bureaucratic style that even they were very difficult to understand despite the fact that the people who we actually Yugoslav communists understood the revolutionary nature of what they were reading, it was very hard for us.

Q: You did that for about a year and then you did what?

ZIMMERMANN: Then I was a normal political officer primarily responsible for internal developments. in Yugoslavia which was great because it meant I had a license to travel and go around the country and see what was going on.

Q: Before we get into the inner workings there, what was the during these three years '65-'68, how would you describe the political economic situation in Yugoslavia at that particular point?

ZIMMERMANN: Well my sense of it is that this was quite a successful country for a communist country. The economy was not doing badly. They would swat down economic reform proposals quite regularly, and you had a lot of economic duplication because each republic had its own steel mill and oil refinery and so forth. But my sense of it was the Yugoslavs were doing pretty well, were conscious of doing pretty well. They could travel to the west which no other communist country allowed. They had a press which though a bit Delphic and Aesopian occasionally said some rather true things and would involve itself in a debate over national policy and so forth. You did not have the sense, at least I didn't, of a people that was really oppressed. In fact, Yugoslavs if anything were exuberant, sometimes to the point of arrogance I found. Of course they had something that nobody else in Eastern Europe had which was a global vision because they had gotten themselves into the non-aligned movement as a founding member, and that of course, meant they had to have a view on every issue known to man, and they did and would expound this view with the most incredible certitude. So there was a certain degree of charm in all of this, I think that made the communism rather palatable.

Q: Did you have any impression of with your contacts about the Tito's secret police whatever you call it the UDBA sort of sitting on things or not?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Some people would talk about it. Again it was probably rare for eastern Europe, particularly non-Serbs. I had a Slovene friend for example, who was a professor affiliated with an institution in Belgrade who would take us out in the field for picnics and so forth and would tell me how much he hated Tito and basically would tell me anything with no restraint. I never discovered that in the Soviet Union, at least not in the early '70s when I was there. The secret police were obviously very powerful. During the time I was there they were weakened considerably because of the discovery that their leader, Alexander Rankovich who was supposed to be heir apparent to Tito was bugging Tito's own office, and essentially seemed to be preparing the way for some kind of coup. He was purged and UDBA, the secret police, I think were cut back considerably. So, they didn't become the monster, they didn't continue to be the monster that an organization like the KGB was. But there was a lot of police presence, activity. Yugoslavia was certainly a police state. There was a kind of a police mentality. Even people who considered themselves liberals might have grown up in a police background. I have a friend today who was a graduate of Rutgers law school, who is the manager of the largest hotel in Belgrade, a very western oriented Serb. He and his wife met because they were both visiting their respective fathers in prison. They were both secret police officials who had been indicted and sentenced for criminal acts. There is something a little bit bizarre in this story but it is not unusual to find people with a police background. The last prime minister of Yugoslavia who was certainly a liberal although a Yugoslav communist, Budimir Lanchar, started as a member of the secret police in Dalmatia. So it is kind of seen as in a way much more than in the west, as a way of getting to power.

Q: What was the impression of the embassy about how Yugoslavia was oriented in sort of the world and in America's interest?

ZIMMERMANN: I would say from the ambassador on down, we were relatively sympathetic to Yugoslavia. We could understand that it had to kind of take a neutral position between the United States and the Soviet Union. We were not asking it to line up with us because we knew that would be impossible. I would say there was a tendency to be somewhat benevolent toward some of the excesses that would occasionally happen under Tito like the arrest of this poor guy who wrote the magazine article criticizing the Soviets and got arrested because the Soviet ambassador said that he better be arrested. That changed a bit after Albrecht left. His successor Larry Silverman was a right wing Republican political appointee who had been in the justice Department, decided that Yugoslavia was no different from the Soviet Union and based his policies on that kind of approach, and ultimately when he left office wrote a long article in Foreign Policy which made those points. We were probably wrong to be as accepting of Yugoslavia just as Silverman was wrong to assume that Yugoslavia was no different from Moscow.

Q: Did you find that as you travel around and did your political reports that I don't want to say deliberately pulling your punches but was it a different attitude do you think? You as well as others you know doing that?

ZIMMERMANN: How do you mean?

Q: In other words you can write a story about, I mean write a report on the internal politics and such a place and place a different emphasis on than maybe if you were saying that shows the communist party isn't giving an inch to anything here or you can say you are just not digging very deeply into how things are actually working internally.

ZIMMERMANN: Well I can't remember very much of what I wrote in those days, but I do remember that we did quite a lot of writing on corruption partly because we learned about it because some Yugoslav media were actually reporting on corruption. So, I am not sure we pulled any punches in the sense of not reporting what should have reported or not getting it the kind of weight we should have given it. I do think we didn't draw policy conclusions from what we were reporting in a way perhaps we should have. Human rights was not a declared policy of the United States in those days. It really didn't happen for another ten years when Carter came. But I do think looking back on it we could have expressed ourselves a bit more forthrightly than we did. For example, when Milivan Jilos, one of the worlds great dissidents was released from prison during the time that we were in Yugoslavia, no member of the U.S. embassy was authorized to talk to him. Whereas the British embassy saw him all the time. They didn't seem to feel that their relationship with Tito depended on not seeing Jilos. In fact Jilos was never received in residence of the American Ambassador until I got to Belgrade.

Q: Why, I mean Jilos was highly admired. He had written a book The New Class so that it wasn't as though, he was certainly a major figure.

ZIMMERMANN: He was a world figure. He was a universally acclaimed opponent of communism and having served a nine year sentence, he was freed. Looking back on it, it would not have seemed to have been an enormous risk for some lower level members of the U.S. embassy, maybe not the ambassador to see him. To see what he had to say. Of course, I went to see him all the time by the time I got there, and every time I went to see him I learned a lot.

Q: It does seem incredible. What about the nationalities problem? Again we were talking about at that time how Tito was handling it, how we saw Serbia, Croatia, Bosnians, etc.

ZIMMERMANN: I have to say I was not really aware of the depth of the nationality problem. This may have been because I was naive or it may have been because this was one thing Yugoslavs tended to try to hide from foreigners. It also may be that it was not as big a problem as all that. We knew there was a problem in Kosovo, the southern province of Serbia that the Serbs were pressing very hard against the Albanians there, and that there were rumored atrocities and torturings and so forth. We also knew there was a

strong outbreak of language nationalism in Croatia. Their view was that Serbo-Croatian is not a language. Croatian is a separate language. We have to have our own words, and that this could spill over very quickly into political tension as it did in 1971 when Tito then purged a group of so-called Croatian nationalists. I remember believing, and I think I actually said this in various reports and speeches, that Yugoslavia is not the most unstable country in Europe, that you don't have to worry about Yugoslavia staying together. It will stay together at least as long as Tito is there. So, I have to say I didn't take the nationalism problem very seriously in the 1960s.

Q: It was my impression (I was not a political officer. I was a consular officer. We overlapped part of the time. I left a little before you did) that Tito was really working hard on suppressing the nationalist thing. It was brotherhood and unity was sort of the motto. Maybe the new generation growing up would not have the same feelings. This is naive as hell on my part but I think maybe this positive feeling kind of permeated the embassy officers. Did you have any feeling?

ZIMMERMANN: I think that might be true. On the one hand, Tito cracked down very hard on any outbreak of nationalist sentiment. That is very intimidating, of course, so there wasn't very much that was visible. I think the point you make is actually quite interesting, that we were still just a generation away from WWII when we were in Yugoslavia in the 1960s. So people who had been young in their teens and twenties in that war, were still only in their 40s in the 60s. They had a very clear memory of the horrors of that war, and they may have felt that we have to transcend this. We have to get away from this kind of approach. So many Yugoslavs were killed by other Yugoslavs in WWII. But if you then fast forward to 25 years later, the people who were in their 40s are now in their 60s and 70s. They are retired for most cases. They don't count any more. The people who are in their 40s now are people who don't remember the war, who don't remember what happened, who don't remember how horrible it was. It is quite conceivable that that generational gap made it easy for the dictators, the nationalist dictators of today to find a following.

Q: I remember when you would strip everything else away and think about what was American policy towards Yugoslavia, that if Yugoslavia broke up, it would immediately, having Hungarians and Bulgarians and Croats and Serbs going at each other within these borders, offer an opportunity for the Soviet Union to come. In a way Yugoslavia and Berlin were the two places where it looked like world war III could start because it would be very hard for either the Soviets or the American allies to stand still if the other started meddling in that country.

ZIMMERMANN: I don't think that is an unreal scenario. Back in the '60s certainly it wasn't. If Yugoslavia broke up, there would certainly be a Soviet bid to take over the eastern and southern part and perhaps to get as far as the Adriatic because Montenegro which has always been a rather pro Soviet part of Yugoslavia has some coastline on the Adriatic. The Soviets because of the Albanian defection and because of the Yugoslav defection had been denied access to the Adriatic. A Yugoslav breakup would have given

them the opportunity to strike, to go for that. I think there was a real danger they would have done it. They could have come pouring through Bulgaria, through Hungary, so I don't think that is an unreal scenario at all. It was in our interest to help to keep Yugoslavia together, and Tito was the only available instrument for doing that. I don't apologize for the policy at all. I think it was the right policy.

Q: I can remember as I drove through Bosnia and Montenegro particularly in Bosnia seeing these roads that all of a sudden got very wide, and you knew they were to be used as airfields in case of something happening. It was at least my impression that the Yugoslav army was poised to fight the Soviets if they came in. That seemed to be where they were pointed towards.

ZIMMERMANN: The only possible opponent. They weren't going to fight the American army.

Q: You left there in '68. Where did you go?

ZIMMERMANN: In '68 I came back to Washington to do the one job I really didn't want to do which was to work in INR, Intelligence and Research. I was right not to want to do it.

Q: Okay, so we will pick this up the next time you came back in '68 working in INR.

Today is March 18, 1997. Warren, you were in INR. I would like to get the dates at the beginning. You were there from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I was there from the late summer of 1968. In fact my arrival in INR coincided with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. I stayed until long about March of 1970.

Q: Okay. What was where were you in INR?

ZIMMERMANN: I was in the part that was then called RSB. I don't remember what it stands for anymore, but it was the Soviet foreign policy. I was responsible for Soviet policy in Africa and Latin America, and later on in my tour there Soviet policy in Eastern Europe.

Q: You mentioned you arrived, what was it, August of 1968 is when the Soviets invaded Czechoslovakia with the willing support of their allies. I am putting quotes around willing. Although it wasn't on your desk, what was the general presumption you were getting from people; why was this happening, and also were they talking about the Brezhnev doctrine at that time?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, there were various formulations of the Brezhnev doctrine. Of course, the Soviets never referred to it as that. There was a Pravda editorial as I recall that talked about the need for every member of the socialist commonwealth as they called it to meet certain standards, and if they didn't meet those standards, that was not just their affair alone, that was the affair of the entire commonwealth. Of course the leading nation in the commonwealth was the Soviet Union. We had been getting mixed signals from Yugoslavia as to whether the Soviets would invade to choke off the Prague spring. I personally thought they wouldn't invade. I was surprised by what they did as a lot of people were I think.

Q: Well, was there any feeling that by doing this, they may have sent out a strong lesson, but at the same time the Soviets sent out two lessons. One, they wouldn't tolerate this, and two that their relations with their other block countries while they might fear the Soviets they weren't going to embrace them. Were they a feeling they were developing antipathy?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think in a way looking back, the Soviets were in a lose-lose situation. If they didn't invade Czechoslovakia it was pretty clear that things were going to get out of hand, that Dubcek was going to allow a totally free press that was heading in that direction anyway, that the Czechoslovak adherence to the Warsaw Pact would come into question as had happened in Hungary twelve years before, and that there could be an unraveling, a sort of a domino effect in the rest of the bloc. That was undoubtedly what was in the minds of Brezhnev and company when they went in. So they felt they had to stop that, but in stopping it, they won for themselves yet again the undying enmity of not only the people of Czechoslovakia but the people of Poland, the people of Hungary and everybody else, all of whom were going to look for the next opportunity to challenge the Soviets. It didn't happen for 12 years. It happened in Poland in 1980 and there it was extremely serious because these were workers. This was not an intellectual movement or a student movement. These were trade union people.

Q: And they were also sitting right on the Soviet supply lines for their main line forces.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. This is a much more important country for them, the Soviets than Czechoslovakia was. Everything comes around of course, and now we are looking at the possibility of NATO expansion. And the Russians are fixated not on the Czech Republic or Hungary, they are fixated on Poland becoming a member of NATO and thereby putting a hostile alliance right on their border again, or for the first time. I should not say again, this is for the first time.

Q: Again trying to capture the spirit of the times, when you got to RSB, what was the thinking about the leadership, Brezhnev, and the Politburo? Was this a vigorous active group?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I think the general view was this was a very old fashioned group led by ideologues like Suslov who was mired in Marxist Leninist terminology that Brezhnev was not the sort of person you could expect to move into any kind of a major

embrace of the west. There were actually some erroneous conclusions drawn from that because it was only a question of four years later that you have the Nixon trip to Moscow and made some actual progress in the U.S.-Soviet relationship. But I think it undermined everybody that the Soviets were not going to let anybody mess around in Eastern Europe, neither the west nor the local leaders themselves. There would be a very narrow span or scope for independent activity in Eastern Europe and in the aftermath some leaders were able to manage things better than others. Probably the best in terms of winning some independence was Ceausescu in Romania and Kadar in Hungary. Two very different people of course. They managed to push the envelope about as far as you could push it in terms of independence from or relative independence from the Soviet embrace. Czechoslovakia became a tragic case. There was a debate in INR over whether Husak who the Slovak who took over after Dubcek, he was put in by the Soviets, was a liberal or a conservative. The fact of the matter is it didn't make any difference at all. He was a Soviet puppet, and no matter how many years he spent in prison under the old regime which he had, he was going to do what the Soviets said, and he remained in power right up until the real Czech revolution in the late 1980s, and was a rather pathetic figure having no independence at all.

Q: Looking sort of at the other side, what was the feeling of your fellow officers and all as the Nixon administration came in? I mean was there any feeling about where this guy was going or anything about Nixon?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, as I recall, the first thing that happened was a flurry of requests from the NSC headed by Kissinger to the State Department to do all kinds of studies up and down and back and forth on all parts of the world. There were some cynics in INR who knew Kissinger, who said this is just an effort to tie us up because the real policy is going to be made elsewhere. We are going to have to do all these things and nobody will read them in the end, and Kissinger is going to go his own way. That turned out to be, of course, exactly accurate. That was one of Kissinger's techniques for insuring that the State Department did not play a major role in foreign policy making was to tie them up in paper. INR got the brunt of that.

Q: Who was sort of the hierarchy in INR as far as people you worked with?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, Hal Sonnenfeldt was the head of it when I started, but of course he was moved quickly over to the White House and became Kissinger's main person for Europe. Then Ken Kurst took over who was an amiable and competent, but not very flamboyant figure. The main problem in INR bureaucratically was there was a layering of the clearance system, so that the junior analysts of which I was one would write a paper. Then it would go to the immediate superior who would change it, and then if the superior of that immediate superiors didn't like what the immediate superior had done would change it in a different way, so by the time it actually became a product which would get to some policy maker, so much time had gone by that it was probably out of date and it had been eviscerated of any points it might have made at any stage during the process that it was useless. So, INR played an absolutely nugatory role I would say, in the State Department because of this very antique and antiquated clearance process. It improved a

great deal when Mort Abramowitz took it over and he made it much more relevant to what the needs of the policy makers were. As I recall it, the INR that I worked in was an organization in which you generated your own ideas, your own papers. There was somebody we had who was interested only in Finland, and he would write paper after paper on Finland, a country with absolutely no interest to American policy makers. None at all. These interminable papers would come up on Finland. These were ones that passed the clearance process very easily because nobody knew anything or cared. It became a kind of a metaphor for what INR was doing. It was pathetic, I thought.

Q: Was there any connect between what you were doing and the desk?

ZIMMERMANN: Very little in those days. I think, again that has been a more modern occurrence.

Q: What you are saying now applies to the time I was in INR back in the early '60s where there was almost no connect. I was there when they added another layer of sort of sub continent directors on top of, under the continent directors of INR, just that clearance problem.

ZIMMERMANN: It was terrible, and it insured that INR would play no role at all.

Q: Well, but again, at least you were looking at the Soviets in Africa.

ZIMMERMANN: In the third world in general.

Q: Well let's talk about Africa first and then elsewhere. What were some of the developments during the '68-'70 period?

ZIMMERMANN: I must say I only dimly remember a lot that was going on there. The Biafran war was probably the biggest thing. There were certainly competitions between the Soviets and the United States for different pieces of Africa, the horn, West Africa and so forth, but the defining event, I guess was the Biafran war.

Q: Were the Soviets involved in the Biafran war?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't remember really whether they were very deeply involved. To the extent they were, I think they were on the side of the federal government against the breakaway Biafrans. But I have to say I was not particularly informed. I can't remember seeing very much of the intelligence that was generated on that even from the CIA. Because again, in those days there was not a very close relationship between INR and CIA.

Q: Well then, what other areas were of interest to you?

ZIMMERMANN: Well during the INR period, I volunteered to work on eastern Europe. Ultimately I was able to do that. That of course, was an area that I knew a bit more about and was closer to my own fields of interest. But again, I don't remember writing a single paper that had an effect on any U.S. policy because of these clearance and bureaucratic problems that we've discussed. It was a very frustrating period. The minute I had an opportunity to get out of it, I did.

Q: Well did you find a realization on the part of the people who were one rung above you, not just because of you but because of others realizing that they were a non-functioning system, or was there sort of a general tolerance, well this is just an assignment and get it over with, or sort of delight in doing this.

ZIMMERMANN: A lot of the people who had senior positions in INR in those days we not foreign service officers. They were civil servants. They had academic or quasi academic backgrounds, and they had very little interest in policy. They had very little interest in getting to the policy makers. They were much more interested in being right and making sure that if you said something wrong even if it was perhaps not even important, that it got corrected. So, I didn't feel that the organization was at all responsive to the kinds of things that a policy maker would want. To some degree that was attributable to the fact that foreign service officers were at the bottom rather than in the middle or at the top of the organization.

Q: Did you find the officers at your level were pretty restive?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, everybody was restive. There was a general feeling of frustration. Morale was terrible. It was the worst two years I spent in 33 years in the foreign service.

Q: Well, in 1970 you were released on good behavior.

ZIMMERMANN: In 1970, well first of all I was assigned to the Czech desk which I thought would be a fascinating job. It turned out it wouldn't have been given the fact that Czechoslovakia was not moving anywhere. But then there was a lucky hit. I was offered a job as speech writer for the Secretary of State who was at that point William Rogers, working out of the office of the counselor of the State Department, Richard Petterson. That had come about because when I was in Belgrade we were inspected, and the chief inspector who was a very fine foreign service officer named Bud Scherer who had been an ambassador several times in Africa and later went on to be the head of one of our major CSCE review meetings in Europe and was Ambassador to Czechoslovakia later on as well, was looking for, he had a mandate to look for people who were good writers who could become speech writers for the Secretary of State. My name was put in for that and he interviewed me and asked me if I wanted to do it, and I said, "I would." Nothing happened for a couple of years, but somehow my name got in the system, and when Rogers really did need somebody or when Petterson needed somebody for Rogers, my name came up. So I was interviewed by Petterson, Ultimately by the secretary and was hired for the job.

Q: You did this from '70 to...

ZIMMERMANN: '70 to '73.

Q: Could you describe what is the role of a speech writer?

ZIMMERMANN: Well it is interesting. I was working for a Secretary of State who did not like to give speeches. He did not feel that he gave speeches very well. He was never very sure of his information. He was undergoing a period of terrible frustration during his whole secretaryship because of the relationship with Kissinger who was cutting him out of a lot of things that he definitely should have been in because Rogers had some quite good judgment on some things, but didn't have the confidence to press it. So, this was a man who did not particularly want good writing or clear or colorful writing. He wanted cautious writing. He wanted things that would be safe.

Q: Do you think this is part of his lawyers training or not?

ZIMMERMANN: I think it was part of his lawyers training, part of his personality, and part of his relationship with Kissinger. He did not want to get into any more trouble with Kissinger and with Nixon than he already was. I discovered, when I started I did a couple of practice features for Petterson who had worked for 20 years at the UN and was very skillful as a person who understood the politics of speechmaking and how you could push policy by a good speech. Petterson was particularly interested in getting a policy of getting divided states into the UN including China. He was constantly pushing me to write a speech on the universality of, the principle of universality in the UN and to get Rogers to make it. We must have written ten or fifteen different versions of that speech. Rogers would've had to take it to the President of course, and what Rogers didn't know was that Kissinger and Nixon already had a China policy that went way beyond Chinese representation in the UN. But it was I suppose I learned more in that three years than in any other period, partly because it got me on almost all the trips that Rogers made around the world, and partly because I was constantly having to write about issues that the Secretary of State had to speak about and that meant most of the major issues of American foreign policy. I had to get the nuances right; I had to work with the different desks the regional bureaus, the super functional bureaus and so forth, and get the complexities right. That was an enormously useful discipline because it gave you a birds eye view of how things looked at the top of the pyramid while I was still a relatively junior officer. I was at least doing things that came to the attention of the Secretary of State. When he actually gave the speech that I had written and maybe written dozens of drafts of by the time he gave it, it became a part of the foreign policy of the U.S.

Q: How did you feel, I mean here you are a relatively junior officer, you are writing speeches, you say lots of drafts which I assume you were having to clear back and forth with people. Were you aware of other elements of the State Department trying to slip in

their particular hobby horse? Can you give any examples of things I mean what was your role and how did this work?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh it happened all of the time. Let me see if I can think of an example. The way it worked was I would if the Secretary had accepted a speech engagement, and usually the audience defined what the subject would be. If it was a Jewish audience, it would be the Middle East issue usually. So you would have the date and you would have the general subject of the speech. I talked to Petterson who was always very good at giving a fairly clear idea of what the general lines of the speech should be. Then I would go to the relevant bureau if it was a regional bureau, NEA for example. Often the Assistant secretary if the assistant secretary was interested in the case at NEA. He always was because it was Joe Cisco and he himself was very good with words. We would sit down and maybe even somebody in the bureau would write a draft which would give an idea of what the bureau wanted. The draft was almost never acceptable, never the kind of thing the Secretary would actually give, but it would give you a sense of what the policy ideas were, and then it would be my job to put those into the kind of language that Rogers would accept. The bureaus being disciplined organizations would not as a rule send up in a speech draft a cockamamie or radical idea. After all they had been dealing with the policy process for a long time. In fact, the game was to try to push the bureaus and ultimately the Secretary to get a little more adventurous than their inclination would be. Safety was always the premium with the bureaus and with the Secretary. So if you wanted to do something that moved things a little beyond the safety, you had to really push the bureaucracy, and it very rarely happened particularly with the Secretary of State because he was not anxious to get out in front of anybody.

Q: Did you have friends coming at you and saying come on Warren, see if you can give a little on this. I mean would you feel that sort of...

ZIMMERMANN: Surprisingly little. I think that is a commentary on the bureaucratic habits of the building. Very few people understood that speeches could be actually a very powerful place to make policy or at least to reinforce a policy or to describe it or to advocate it or to explain it. There was very little understanding of that. I think there is a lot more now. Some of the assistant secretaries understood it very well. Cisco understood it very well. Marshall Green who was then in charge of East Asia understood it very well. Marshall Green himself was a brilliant writer. Petterson understood it very well. The policy planning people some of them, usually the more junior ones understood it because their mandate was to look at policy in general. But the bureaus tended, being very safe, saw speeches as something of a threat, something that could cause things to get out of hand. So by and large, they were very conservative in their approach and therefore would not initiate things very often. If they knew the Secretary of State had a speech engagement that he had agreed to, then of course, they didn't have anything they could say against it. They had to contribute and they did. But you didn't feel that the building was popping with all kinds of major initiatives. That was I think unfortunate, but it was pretty well the way it was. I do make one exception which was policy planning staff. They occasionally would come in with ideas. It was fun to work with them.

Q: Well, I take it policy planning moves back and forth what it means. I take it policy planning at this time, '70-'73, had people in it who were really looking at policy as opposed to acting as sometimes speechwriters themselves, that sort of thing.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Policy planning actually got the speech writing function after Kissinger became Secretary of state. He brought Winston Lord who was a very gifted speech writer, he brought him over as head of policy planning. From then on the speech writing function tended to center in policy planning which is a good place for it because it is an organization that is supposed to generate ideas. Up until then, up until Kissinger became Secretary of State, which was I think '73, policy planning had a somewhat peripheral role in the speech function.

Q: Did you find, you mentioned sometimes William Rogers was not sure, unsure you might say the material or something. I have had some interviews where people have said well, they were on a trip with William Rogers and he didn't read the briefing books and he wasn't really very well prepared. I mean this may have just been one time and it may not be an accurate report. What was your feeling about this?

ZIMMERMANN: I think he wasn't very well prepared. He didn't have a great background in foreign policy. He was picked partly because he had been very close to Nixon. He had been quite a good attorney general. He was seen, I think, by Nixon as someone whom he could control and was safe. It is possible that Nixon didn't foresee the extraordinary relationship he would have with Kissinger when he started.

Q: There was no, I mean Kissinger sort of appeared out of the, Nixon and Kissinger really didn't know each other.

ZIMMERMANN: They met each other once. So that was a relationship that evolved, and that put Rogers more and more in the shade. I think Rogers was bored with it, frankly. I don't think he enjoyed it at all. He was constantly being humiliated by Kissinger, sometimes in a very savage way. The Middle East was really the only area that was left to him, and Kissinger, I think stayed out of that because he was Jewish, and in those days he felt that he shouldn't, this would be a major liability for him as a negotiator. But that didn't last very long either as you remember. Rogers was given the Middle East mandate and I think he did a good job. He had, as I said, a very good bureau in NEA. He had Cisco as assistant secretary. He had Roy Atherton as principal deputy. These were superior minds and very good people. I think they did a very good job. The best you can hope for in the Arab-Israeli context, at least back in the '70s, was to keep things ticking over and keep negotiations moving and hopefully avoid major wars. There was the major war in 1973 which was probably not avoidable, but I think they did a pretty good job.

Q: While you were doing these speeches, what was sort of your, how did you look upon the NSC? I mean were they somebody there, or did you have contacts, or was somebody always there saying we really want it this way and what they wanted is what they got or not?

ZIMMERMANN: There was very bad blood between the State Department and the NSC. We were certainly not encouraged to deal with them on a frequent basis. I never, as I recall, sent a speech draft over to the NSC for clearance, and I doubt if Rogers or Petterson sought Kissinger's approval on any speeches that Rogers would give. That was I think, an unfortunate situation because you shouldn't have these two branches of the government working that way. I am afraid that it how it was. It wasn't unique. It was also true during the Vance Brzezinski period. It was very damaging, I think, certainly damaging to the State Department who except in the Middle East were essentially cut out of all of the major areas of foreign policy.

Q: Let's talk a bit about trips. What does the speech writer do on a trip? Could you give any examples?

ZIMMERMANN: A speechwriter is there to do the occasional things that a secretary might have to do. A statement at the airport when he arrives, A statement at the airport when he leaves, toasts during the various official functions that he had. Very occasionally a major speech, but with Rogers that was not very often. I was along kind of as somebody to step in when there was a need to get up, usually in a hurry, a toast or an airport statement. Now there were two exceptions to this. One was when you had a major NATO meeting. There were two NATO meetings a year, and I always went on those. I was always responsible working very closely with the European bureau with the Secretary's statement at NATO which was a programmed statement. It was classified, but it was heavily backgrounded by Bob McCloskey, the press spokesman at the time. So it was a very important policy statement. I was always responsible for the beginning and the middle and the end of that process. Then secondly, when there were other trips that went to some kind of multi-lateral destinations. The Secretary's speech to the UN, for example, I was always involved with. The Secretary's speech to the annual meeting of the OECD in Paris, I was always involved with. SEATO and CENTO which were still around in those days, there would be speeches for them, and I would be involved with those. So, the trips had to do with a mixture of the centerpiece speeches which were meant to be major policy speeches for the area involved, and these occasional things, the toasts and whatnot.

Q: Just a bit of how to do it, for toasts, did you have a book full of trivia about a country or something like that because usually there are allusions to local personalities or history or something like that. Did you get, how did you deal?

ZIMMERMANN: I tended not to do very much of that. I would get background material from the desk and so forth on different countries, but I tried to avoid doing too much about local issues in the countries because it was too easy to make a mistake, and it could very quickly become counterproductive if you said the wrong thing. After all it was their country not ours. They may read things in a very different way from the way that is intended. In any case what the people of Thailand or Vietnam want to hear the Secretary of State say is not what they already know about themselves. They want to hear about the American approach, the American policy and so forth. So I tended to concentrate on that, and I think Rogers was much more comfortable with that as well.

Q: Did you get involved with the Vietnam process during this time?

ZIMMERMANN: Very little. You will recall that I was in Vietnam once when you were there, and that was the only time. That was for a meeting of the troop contributing countries. There was a meeting, there were speeches. As I recall I wrote one for that. I went on the trip to one of the outlying areas. But no, I was not very much involved in Vietnam. I only visited it once. I did contribute to speeches and write some speeches involving Vietnam and Cambodia. In fact the Cambodia issue, we are talking on the day after Tony Lake has withdrawn his candidacy for the CIA, and he was somebody who resigned from the government in 1970.

Q: You are talking about the spring of 1970.

ZIMMERMANN: Spring of 1970. There was a big furor in the State Department too about that. One of the people in Petterson's office who was a USIA officer participated in organizing a petition of protest to what we had done that was going to be presented to Rogers. I was asked to sign the petition. I had real problems with what we were doing in Cambodia. I didn't feel quite right about signing the petition because I was afraid it would leak as it ultimately did. So, I wrote Rogers a letter of my own asking that we refrain from any further incursion into Cambodia. One other person in the office, Don McHenry who later became the American Ambassador to the UN wrote a similar letter. I think it was a testament to Rogers. The petition leaked and brought a lot of unfavorable publicity of course, to Nixon, Kissinger, and Rogers. Our letters didn't leak. Rogers made a blanket decision that nobody would be punished for this protest, these various kinds of protest. The head of USIA, who at the time was Frank Shakespeare, took punitive action against every one of his officers who had been involved including this one USIA officer who was working in our office. His assignment, his ongoing assignment was broken because he had been involved in the petition activity. But Rogers made it very clear that nobody was going to suffer. As far as I know, nobody did. He was a very decent man.

Q: Was there any speech that you can think of at this time, although as you say you were it was not a time when bold initiatives from the State Department, but do you think of any speech that sort of grabbed some attention and was controversial?

ZIMMERMANN: No there wasn't. And had there been, I think I would have been quickly fired. The whole game was to avoid such a speech and we had a Secretary of State who did not want to give speeches that would be attention grabbing and make a lot of news. So, my job was not to write that kind of speech. When I ended up writing speeches for myself later on in my career, when I was the head of the American delegation to a CSCU review meeting in Vienna, I wrote my own speeches. Then I spent a lot of time trying to get publicity because that is what that game is about.

Q: We haven't mentioned Latin America the OAS or anything like this. Did this cause during this time any blip on the radar at all?

ZIMMERMANN: No, very little. There was an annual OAS meeting with he required speech and I guess I that, but I don't think it took very much of the Secretary's time, and I don't recall any trips to Latin America during the three years I was working for him.

Q: Were you there during the '73 the Yom Kippur War? That would have been October '74.

ZIMMERMANN: I was already assigned to Moscow by then. I had just recently, I guess the month before, arrived in Moscow. So, I saw that from the Soviet point of view, and also Kissinger visited Moscow right then.

Q: What about the opening to China. That happened on your watch didn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, it did. It happened while I was in the speech writing job. I remember driving to work and hearing a voice, a voice with a German accent which I didn't recognize, talking about China. It was Kissinger who had just come back and was describing his visit. The reason I didn't recognize his voice is Kissinger never spoke on the record as National Security Advisor. Everybody in the State Department was totally stunned. I don't think anybody knew about it from Rogers on down.

Q: Well what was the general feeling about this? That son-of-a-bitch did it to us and not let us know, or was it I mean sort of professional, sort of a sigh saying at last we were taking care of that particular problem?

ZIMMERMANN: Well its hard for me to define. I think there had been a lot of the people in the Department who wanted to have a breakthrough with China, who felt that things were going in the wrong direction, and it was time to move. That was tempered, of course, with the fact that the White House had done it on its own and State had not been involved and so forth. I think the general feeling was that this was a major and positive step forward.

Q: I think this is true. Well then you went, your next assignment was Moscow. You went there when in '73?

ZIMMERMANN: I went there it must have been September. No, I guess it was July of '73 because I was there during the summer. I had always been interested in Soviet stuff, and I was already pretty old to have my first assignment to Moscow. I was 39, and I went as the deputy head of the political section.

Q: You were there from July '73 until when?

ZIMMERMANN: Until the summer of '75. I don't remember exactly.

Q: Was it hard to break in to the Soviet clique is not the right word, but the Soviet circle at that point or had your Belgrade and INR credentials enough to get you in?

ZIMMERMANN: Certainly the Belgrade and INR credentials were not. I did have strong support from Spike Dubs who had been my boss in Belgrade. He was an old Soviet hand. He was political counselor in Belgrade, and he was constantly trying to get me into the Soviet field. He was the director of the office of Soviet affairs in the State Department, so he basically greased the assignment for me, so I had a sort of a following wind from an important person in the Soviet field. Yes, but I had some trepidation because I hadn't been a member of the club. But it quickly vanished. When you get there you realize that nobody knows all that much. We have all been trained in Russian by then, so the language was not a serious problem. There were people of various degrees of experience in the political section that I came to. Mark Garrison, head of the political section, a brilliant officer, had not had much more Soviet experience than I had. Kurt Kaman whom I supervised had enormous Soviet experience. Actually his Russian was so good that he had been an interpreter. But it was a very collegial atmosphere. I am a strong believer that hardship posts bring out the best in people. People learn to live together and learn to be tolerant.

Q: Who was the ambassador at this time?

ZIMMERMANN: Dubs was the chargé for quite a while, nearly a year for the time I was there, and then Walter Stoessel became the ambassador. He was a very nice man and very easy to work with.

Q: What were relations during '73 to '75 with the Soviets?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, there had been the Nixon visit in '72. There had been the Brezhnev visit in May of '73, early in the spring, sometime in the spring of '73. So you already had had two summits. We were looking for a kind of a breaking out of very close relations and of course, that didn't happen. I found when I got there in 1973 an extremely rigid society, awfully hostile to the U.S. Your contacts were extremely limited to largely to the USA desk of the Soviet foreign ministry which was run by people who were not at all friendly. I would say that on the policy level while things were looking pretty good and there were plenty of high level meetings. Gromyko and Kissinger would meet quite frequently. One didn't get the feeling that this an amazingly important rapprochement. In the middle of this period you had the enormous mistake in my view of the Jackson-Vanik amendment which was intended to put pressure on the Soviets to release large numbers of Soviet Jews. The price turned out to be higher than the Soviets we were willing to pay. The trade-off would be they would release 60,000 Soviet Jews in return for which we would give them a trade agreement and most favored nation. They ultimately decided that wasn't the price they were prepared to pay so that was a rush of cold water on the economic relationship, and it also reduced the outflow of Soviet Jews for a couple of years.

Q: As that Jackson Vanik amendment developed, was there any input from the embassy or State Department that you were aware of?

ZIMMERMANN: It is one occasion where I wished I had pushed harder for a different U.S. position. The State Department including Kissinger of course, was opposed to the Jackson-Vanik amendment. There was a question of how much you were going to concede to the Congress. I felt in my bones that this was something the Soviets maybe wouldn't take. They wouldn't live with it. People higher up than me and people who knew more about the Soviet Union than me like Stoessel and Jack Matlock who by then was the DCM felt it would be okay, that we would still get the Jews out and the MFN and the trade agreement to go forward. I tended to let their greater expertise influence my own judgment. I didn't push as hard as I now think I should have for the alternative view which was they would do what they ultimately did which was say this is no deal. Our pride is not going to be dragged in the mud like this.

Q: Was anybody putting forward the fact Senator Jackson, Scoop Jackson from Washington was a very hard line basic very anti Soviet. Everybody is anti Soviet but you know, as anti Soviets go he was more anti than most. That this was an effort on his part either one to get a bunch of favorable constituents out of the Soviet Union or two, to screw up the growing rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, he certainly didn't like the rapprochement, and he was heavily influenced, of course, by Richard Perle who was one of his chief advisors. I think his primary objective was to get the Jews out. Of course, that is something that everybody shared. It wasn't a question of was the objective right; it was a question of what was the best way to get there.

Q: Well, it worked.

ZIMMERMANN: It didn't work because the Jewish emigration went down and stayed down for the rest of the 1970s until the end of the decade when SALT II was being negotiated.

Q: You had served in Yugoslavia. We were both there. Yugoslavia with all its problems was sort of a country that worked, not wonderfully, but it was kind of fun and all that. What was your impression when you finally got to the Soviet Union, the big apple of the Slavic world and all that?

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely worlds apart from what I had seen in communist Yugoslavia. Just no comparisons at all. In Yugoslavia you had a very broad range of people you could talk to and who would talk to you relatively freely. In the Soviet Union it was very limited to targeted officials, KGB people who were thrown across your path, and a very small number of dissidents, many of whom were probably working for the KGB also. So, it was a genuine dictatorship. It was totalitarian in the precise and literal sense of the word. Yugoslavia was not like that. Even the other communist countries were not like that. Yugoslavia was as far away from it as any communist country could have been, I think.

Q: What about your observations of the Soviet economy, the Soviet system?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, everybody saw that the economy didn't work as it pertained to the needs of people and consumers and to health care and that kind of thing. Our son Matt had his appendix out in a Soviet hospital. While the operation worked fine, there was tremendous apprehension that something horrible would happen because something horrible quite often did happen in Soviet hospitals. So, health care didn't work although it was universal. Consumer goods were not available. The consumers simply didn't get priority. The education system, by the way, was extremely good. We had all three of our children in the Soviet school, a normal Soviet school, not a special one for foreigners. The quality of the math was two or three grades ahead of American education. But it was very much rote learning. Your mind was not asked to expand. You weren't asked for initiatives. You weren't asked for creative thought or anything like that. Still it was a good education system. What we believed, and what I think was then true, was that what we were not seeing did work very well, and that was the whole military industrial complex. That was where the resources went. That was where the priorities were, and the Soviets could put people on the moon before we could, or they could launch enormous missiles. Their military was definitely one to be feared and one to be dealt with. That was true. So it is simple to say a country that can't even fix a toilet couldn't possibly be a great power because it is certainly possible that you can't or don't want to fix a toilet and still be a great power. I think Russia was.

Q: Was there a feeling that the Soviet Union was still poised maybe to do something nasty in Europe or something?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't think so. There was a great debate about whether Soviet policy was offensive or defensive. I think the answer was it was a combination of both, but it certainly saw the cordon of Eastern European countries as something that was necessary for its security. You have to look at it from the point of view of the Russians who were invaded five times from Europe in the 19th. and 20th. centuries. You could understand why they would have security concerns with regard to countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia and Hungary and so forth, East Germany. But what of course, was totally unacceptable was that those countries simply because they bordered on the Soviet Union, had to have the identical system and had to be totally under the control of Moscow. That was what was unacceptable. I don't think there was really any fear on the part of anybody I knew in the U.S. government that the Soviets were going to break through that cordon of Eastern European countries and invade Western Europe. I think there was no fear of that kind. There was a general tendency, an accurate tendency, to feel that Eastern Europe was really quite unstable because of the nature of the political relationship between the Soviet Union and those countries, and that you could have problems there. Of course you had them in Hungary and Czechoslovakia and Poland and so forth.

Q: What about Soviets and the Cubans dealing in Africa? Were they doing that at the time?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. It was the one area where the detente, which is a word we used actually until about 1975, didn't apply. We did have an improvement in the bilateral relationship with the Soviets. We did have significant arms control agreements, SALT I, the ABM agreement, and the Vladivostok agreement in 1975 and so forth. There was the famous statement of principles that Nixon and Brezhnev had signed in 1972 which was a kind of code of behavior about how two great powers would act in the rest of the world. The Soviets totally trashed it. They paid no attention to it, and they kept running around in Africa and Latin America. There was a general expectation, this is an interesting fact, there was a general expectation when Saigon fell in 1975, that the Soviets would take over Vietnam lock, stock, and barrel. They would have bases. They would use it as a power projection point for the rest of East Asia, and they would be therefore the great power in East Asia. It didn't happen. They tried no doubt.

Q: Cam Ranh Bay was supposed to be a Soviet port.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. And Indonesia would be threatened and the Philippines would be threatened. You remember all that. None of those things happened. So, maybe that was some reason to think even back then, that the Soviets did not make very good power projectors or imperialists. They were pretty deficient because they had a system which was not attractive to anybody.

Q: What was the calculation of what were the Soviets up to? I mean we are now faced with pictures of huge fleets rusty in Vladivostok and Sevastopol and elsewhere. They had a tremendous navy which is power projection way beyond the needs of just sort of defense of the motherland. What was the calculation during this '73 to '75 period? What was this all about?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the head of the Soviet Navy was a very aggressive and powerful admiral named Gorshkov. I think part of the growth of the Soviet navy can be explained bureaucratically that he would constantly make the comparisons with our navy and saying you know, we are really not a great power unless we can project our power through naval vessels. But I think partly it was beyond that it was the general feeling of the politburo that Russian power and prestige is measured in terms of military might. They had to fill all the boxes of military capabilities.

Q: Well from what you said before it is true. I mean without the military might, the ideology, the system had no buyers.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right, no buyers. The Soviets won the allegiance and their links with countries of the third world through their military assistance program. It wasn't through ideology. It was because they were prepared to help countries like Somalia and Ethiopia and Guinea and Mali and so forth arming themselves. That was essentially how they did it.

Q: What was your particular function as deputy head of the political section?

ZIMMERMANN: I was in charge of reporting on foreign policy, dealing with foreign policy issues. We had two. We had Mark Garrison who was head of the section, and then we had myself in charge of foreign policy issues, and Marty Wenick who was in charge of, and later Mel Levitsky, who were in charge of internal affairs.

Q: I would imagine that foreign affairs in a way, could almost be dealt with rather easily. You had lousy connections with the foreign ministry. They certainly weren't going to sit down and tell you the scoop. There was nowhere to go. I mean the newspapers would only contain sort of the canned things. How did you work that?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, Kremlinology is a limited art but it is an art. You can get a sense of how a country is operating and what its approaches are and what it is likely to be able to accept and what it is prepared to reject by reading the press, by talking to the limited contacts you have in the foreign office or in the USA institute which had in it some people who were relatively free from total KGB control.

Q: Arbatov?

ZIMMERMANN: Arbatov's Institute. Although it was very heavily propagandist and had a very heavy dose of the Soviet line whenever you went over there. So, you got maybe 10% more out of being there and talking to them than you would get sitting back in Washington reading the Soviet press, but 10% more could be critical.

Q: One of the things that is often overlooked particularly in these days of tight budgets and talking about do we need embassies and all, there is a tendency to think that our diplomats do nothing but report like reporters and say you can see it on TV. I mean there is the other side of conveying information, talking which maybe in the Soviet Union isn't as important. Could you talk a bit about that side.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I mean we had a series of great ambassadors in the Soviet Union during the Cold war period. I think by far the best and this may come as a surprise to you was Tommy Thompson. I never worked with him, but this was a man who was twice ambassador to the Soviet Union. He spent many years there, and managed to adhere really through the pores a really fine sense of how the Russians would behave at any given situation. He was able to use that knowledge probably to save the possibility of a major conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union in the Cuban missile crisis.

Q: And he happened to be there and available.

ZIMMERMANN: He was actually in Washington in 1962. Kennedy brought him into the Excon, this small group of people that were working. Everything Thompson said turned out to be right. Thompson said, "If you put a blockade outside Cuba, the Russian ships will turn back because they are so secretive that they don't want to be searched." We did, and they did. He was right on that. He said, "Khrushchev will not agree to take the

missiles out unless you make some sort of agreement on taking our missiles out of Turkey." And he was right on that. Thompson would not have had that seat of the pants knowledge had he not spent all those years in the Soviet Union. I think it is a perfect example of how on the job work and training in a man who is intuitively brilliant as Tommy Thompson was, could produce enormous dividends for our national security.

Q: Absolutely. I think it is one of the great moments of the foreign service at that time because the stakes were immense.

ZIMMERMANN: You know, curiously enough, I'd conducted, both times I was in Moscow I would conduct a kind of an informal poll of Soviets who were in the foreign policy field. I would ask them who was the best American ambassador we have had. Thompson would get their vote about 70% of the time. It is interesting. I mean here is a man who understood them very well, and who was able to defeat them in the Cuban missile crisis, and at the same time earned their respect.

Q: Well also too in a way, a professional like that saved the professionals on both sides from their political masters who do stupid things.

ZIMMERMANN: That's true and it is even more true, or it is at least as true in countries where an ambassador has more opportunities to move around and get to know people because there is no substitute for having somebody who is there every day who is getting the feel of the place and who is therefore able to give you a kind of a continuous and reflected view of what is going on and what is likely to happen. You can't do that by jetting back and forth at a high level.

Q: Or by the telephone.

ZIMMERMANN: By the telephone or by sitting in Washington and reading the cables and intelligence reports. You have to have somebody there. It is an important country. You'd be crazy not to be represented by a smart, professional ambassador who can give you these kinds of insights in a unique way that are not available any other way.

Q: Well when you arrived there, you arrived in July, '73, and we had a bad little war in the October war in '73. How did that play in Moscow?

ZIMMERMANN: It was, well, you saw at our level, I mean the embassy level, we saw very little of what was going on because Kissinger came over almost immediately. I guess, the war had ended, so then it was a question of what would happen next. Kissinger came over and had high level meetings with Brezhnev and company. I don't recall that anyone in the embassy was even in those meetings. It is conceivable that Spike Dubs, who was still charge, was, I am not sure whether he was in or not, but I tend to think not. So, we were not really in the loop. I mean this was above the level at which Kissinger who as you know was very secretive with high level stuff, was prepared to engage us. There was one trip. You probably know this story. This is before I got there in 1972. I

think it was '72 when Kissinger made one of his trips to prepare the Nixon summit in Moscow. He didn't even tell the American ambassador that he was there. The American ambassador found out only later that Kissinger had been in town.

Q: I heard that, yes. Incredible.

ZIMMERMANN: That is a wonderful way to undercut any usefulness that an ambassador can have for you.

Q: Well, looking at the foreign affairs side, what was your reading on the relationship during this '73 to '75 time between the Soviets and Castro?

ZIMMERMANN: It was something we rarely saw. I mean it was intended to be quite a quiet period in our relations with Cuba and the Soviet relations with Cuba. I don't recall that it was a big issue at all. In fact, I don't recall a single incident that came up. Of course, we knew that they were a major supplier of the Cubans, that it was a major drain on their own resources. It was the only thing that was keeping the Cubans afloat. We knew all that. I don't remember there was any particular incident or any particular crisis that got anybody's attention.

Q: One of the main rationales of our opening to China during this period was this is the so called China card. That by having relations with China, it meant that the Soviets could no longer rely on the United States and the Chinese being at dagger points, but by having a friendship there, it put extra pressure on the Soviets. Were we seeing that as a, how did we see that?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh I think that's right. I think that is an accurate description of what happened. In Moscow, there was an enormous Chinese embassy in Moscow, enormous, bigger than ours, or nearly as big. The Chinese were all over town spreading the nastiest rumors about the Soviets, usually not true, but they were tremendous sources of very negative disinformation about the Soviets. A very hostile relationship.

Q: Was this a continuing basis?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, constantly. They were very wary of us, and it was only, I think I only once got invited to the Chinese embassy for a meal. They were suspicious of us. The real stuff that was going on between China and the United States was going on between Beijing and Washington. It wasn't going to be going on in Moscow in any case. Stoessel himself had actually played a role in the rapprochement with China. When he was ambassador to Poland, he was involved in some early negotiations with the Chinese, so you would have thought he might have been a person that the Chinese would cultivate in Moscow, but they didn't. So we didn't see it, but I thought that it was a brilliant coup for Nixon and Kissinger to do. I think it really did create some tension with the Soviets, make more incentives for the Soviets to keep a closer relationship with us. I think it very definitely helped out, had that effect.

Q: Did you find any of your Soviet contacts interested in what were we doing with the Chinese?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, yes. There were a lot of questions about that particularly from the USA institute which had a kind of a license to ask you what was going on.

Q: Were you well informed about relations between the United States...

ZIMMERMANN: No, not particularly. Certainly we were not involved in any of the high level exchanges.

Q: What was life like for you and Teeny and the children in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: It wasn't particularly pleasant. We lived in an enormous apartment block. I think there were 5,000 people, maybe a couple of hundred of whom were diplomats and journalists. The rest were Russians. Our kids the first year went to a Russian school which was very stressful and difficult for them, but there were some very good experiences. The Russian children were quite nice to them. The school itself bent over backwards to make sure they were happy because it obviously was a prestige item for the school to have some foreign children. There were only two or three other foreign children in the whole school. But you can't say there was very much hospitality there. You were in an atmosphere of mistrust. You couldn't be sure that even the friendly people were not being sent across your path as police spies and so forth. So, even a weekend away from Moscow or a vacation in the Soviet Union was not a vacation in any real sense of the word. The contacts, as I said, were very limited and quite stilted. There was still a great excitement that came from being in the center of our foreign policy problem. There we were; we were ground zero, and that was fascinating. Very hard for wives, I think. Most of them were not able to work in the embassy. Later on that changed. In my second tour, any wife who wanted to work, could.

Q: Well did you find this causing breakups of marriages and things of this nature?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't think more than usual in the foreign service. I could be wrong about that. I have never seen statistics. I don't know what happened after Moscow assignment. I suppose a breakup would usually occur after. But I mean there certainly were some, and it was no doubt at all a major test of a marriage. If a marriage was fragile to begin with, the Moscow experience would probably blow it apart. But if it was strong or was potentially strong, the Moscow experience could actually strengthen it even further I think.

Q: Were you aware of the infrared or whatever the intelligence test. Could you talk about that?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh yes. That happened while we were there, I mean one of the times. It was very scary because you didn't know what it was, what they were doing it for, if they

were doing it on purpose and what the effects would be. I am still not at all sure that the study that was done after that, I think by Johns Hopkins, was an accurate representation. The Moscow rumor mill among people who served there in the days of the radiation has it that a disproportion of people died with cancer and other diseases that could have been caused by the radiation in Moscow and particularly in the buildings that were radiated than other foreign service posts. The Johns Hopkins study said that isn't true, there is no disproportion. You will not find very many people who served in those days that believed the study.

Q: I have heard many bitter comments about it and also how the State Department responded initially by not informing.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Walter Stoessel died of some sort of Leukemic disease. I have heard various stories about what it was. There was one story that there was radiation that leaked from our own communications office which was just above, on the floor above his office. That may have caused radiation that weakened his health. Other stories are the Soviets were targeting. It doesn't seem credible to me that the Soviets would have purposely tried to incapacitate or kill American diplomats by radiation. It is perfectly logical for me to believe that there were mistakes or that there was just a shoddy discipline of some sort that allowed these waves to penetrate. They may have been surveillance devices that went, that had these side effects. I can't understand the feeling that it would be in the Soviet interest to kill American diplomats by this way.

Q: It doesn't make sense. I mean you know the one place where looking at the Soviet conduct, they knew who our CIA people were, not only in the Soviet Union but also abroad in other posts. We didn't kill each other's chiefs of station. I mean if they were going to do that. But were you aware of the radiation when you arrived there?

ZIMMERMANN: I am trying to remember the time sequence. I am afraid I don't remember it. I simply remember we were told at some point there was radiation, and it hit the building. I lived in the embassy building which was where the radiation occurred. And we were told not to worry, that this was a very low level of power and way below whatever the acceptable limits were. I remember that we made protests to the foreign ministry, and of course they denied everything. They said there is nothing to it. I think there was more of it after I left, and that came back again in the early '80s when I was there. The whole thing came back again.

Q: Did you make any trips throughout the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: Not a lot because I didn't have a job related reason for doing it since I was doing foreign policy, but I did go to a couple of places. I went to Georgia with Senator Kennedy where we met an up and coming young communist party leader named Shevardnadze. This was 1974. I went to Leningrad, of course, a couple of times. I went to a number of towns around the Moscow area where there were pretty cathedrals or other

sort of touristic things to see. I traveled actually more in the '80s when I was DCM and had reason to travel.

Q: Were we looking at the various republics as somehow being a source of weaknesses of the Soviet system at that time?

ZIMMERMANN: I recall believing, and I think I might have even written it in a cable at some point in the '70s that the Soviet Union is very stable, but it has the stability of a catamaran, a bi-hulled boat rather than of a mono hull. A mono hull can sway from side to side; it isn't going to tip over. A catamaran doesn't sway but once it goes, up to a certain point, then it could go all the way over. The Soviet Union was like a catamaran, and the two elements, the two hulls that were unstable were the economy and the nationality issue. And that if you got both of them working together, that is economic crisis and nationality problems, then it could go over. But I saw that as a relatively theoretical concept and Amalrik had already written his book, Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984. My answer to that was of course. Well, he only missed it by five years, seven years.

Q: Yes. Well I think this is true of all of us. I have just finished interviewing somebody who was in charge of keeping the Soviets from getting technology transfers. We are talking about 1988, and the Soviet Union was about to fall apart. Yet he had no feeling of the people that they were sort of sticking it to the Soviets just one more thing. This was just a policy. Well, did you develop, I am trying to capture the mood of the Sovietologists, our people there. You got people who won't or can't talk to you. You have a bureaucracy that is stifling you. You can't travel and all. Was there anything about Russia, the Soviets and all that got people coming, I am talking about our people wanting to go back there and deal with it other than the fact that this happened to be our major problem?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I think you got a straggling of Soviet experts in the United States who were not only interested in the politics and the foreign policy aspects, who were interested in the entire culture and history and so forth. I guess I would put myself somewhat tentatively in that group. I mean ever since I was in college, I studied Russian history and read Russian literature and. Of course, being in the Soviet Union, there are these wonderful art galleries that you can go to. There is wonderful music which was very easy to go to. I mean you just had to go and get a ticket from the KGB people who ran the ticket office in the embassy. I did quite a lot of that. Teeny was much less interested in that. Of course, there were people in the embassy like Jack Matlock who really were serious experts in Russian culture. Jack had taught Russian literature at Dartmouth for example. He spent a lot of time at the theater. But that was a kind of an interesting sidelight. There was avant garde theater that you could go to. Some of it was a bit radical by regime standards. That was even more true in the '80s than in the '70s. So there was a kind of a feeling that we in Moscow the elect. We were in the most important place in the world for the United States foreign policy. We were being subjected to all kinds of hardship, radiation etc. That in a way made up in terms of psychic satisfaction with a lot

of the problems. I emphasize that was not the case with our spouses because they didn't have that kind of psychic satisfaction. They couldn't have it, so it was very difficult.

Q: Some of the people I have talked to served in the Soviet Union talk about going out. These were the ones who were really very good in Russian, to I don't know if I use the right term, to People's lectures.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the knowledge society, the Znaniye Society, had these lectures. For some reason, I think it was a mistake, they were open to anybody, so diplomats could go. What these were were propaganda lectures. I went to a number of them. They were quite fascinating, not so much because of the lecture, because the lecture was a propaganda lecture, To tell Russians what they were supposed to think. What was interesting were the questions. Somebody would say if we are so powerful, why can't I get bread? Things like that. That was very interesting, and they made very interesting cables, reports of those lectures because it really was one of the few opportunities you had to learn what was on people's minds really.

Q: Well you left there in 1975. Where did you go?

ZIMMERMANN: I came back to EUR to work as a policy planning assistant to the assistant secretary who was Arthur Hartman.

Q: This is '75 until when?

ZIMMERMANN: To '77.

Q: '77 policy planning in the EUR.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I had a kind of a liaison with the policy planning staff which was then run by Winston Lord who was a friend of mine. Then following that by Tony Lake.

Q: That was the policy planning bureau, I mean not policy planning bureau, but the policy planning part of EUR, were there the equivalents in other bureaus?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I think we had the only one. I think they all have them now, but the idea was to be a kind of a general idea person for the assistant secretary who was very welcome to ideas, one of the most competent people I have ever met. I did a monthly essay, on themes having to do with Europe. Usually these were cross cutting themes so that they would deal in a comprehensive way with issues which might be missed because of the way the bureau was bureaucratically set up. There was an office that did NATO, and there was another office that did the European Community, and there was another office that did northern Europe and so forth. I tried to find cross cutting issues like nationalism or like the problems of ethnic minorities, stuff like that. I did that once a month. I participated a lot in policy papers that were mandated by the seventh floor or by the White House. It was fun to do. I enjoyed it enormously. It was a very good bureau.

Hartman was the assistant secretary. Jim Lowenstein was his deputy. It was very collegial. It was and is the biggest bureau in the State Department. That was fun.

Q: What were some of the issues? You mentioned nationality and ethnic which has turned out to be- (end of tape)

Could you talk a bit about 1975 to '77, nationalities and ethnic problems as you saw them then.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, Funnily enough I don't think I saw any problems in Yugoslavia. I don't think I dealt with that at all. We were very concerned about Spain. We were very concerned about Corsica.

Q: You are talking about Spain the Basques and the Catalans.

ZIMMERMANN: The Basques and Catalans. With Corsica, the problems between the Flemish and the Walloons in Belgium and so forth. I mean it was the general idea that Europe did have problems with these things, but I guess the prognosis was that things would be all right. The big issue of that period was so called Eurocommunism. That is, the power of communist parties in Western Europe particularly in Italy and France. I was kind of asked to look after that. My conclusion which I am quite proud of actually, was not to worry. "The French communist party," I said, "has a kind of a limit at about 20%. They are not going to get more than that."

Q: And also they weren't really Eurocommunists if I recall. They were still Stalinists at the time where it was sort of the Belinguers and all in Italy who were more receptive.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. It is true the French communists were very Stalinist in their approach. What happened in France was that Mitterrand, who had tried all kinds of different ways to get into power, picked up a socialist party which was in very bad shape, and linked it to the communists, because they had a lot of electoral votes. There was a lot of nervousness in the United States about that. There was a feeling that Mitterrand was going to be taken to the cleaners by communists. Pretty soon we are going to have a communist led government in France. It would be a mistake. Mitterrand said, "Don't worry about a thing. I am going to have them help me get to power and then I am going to destroy them." That is exactly what he did. So, I was pretty relaxed on that score as was Hartman by the way. As for Italy, there the Italian communist party was of course, very much like a middle class party. It had learned how a party works. You take care of things that people need and they are going to vote for you. Again there was a tremendous fear as their numbers crept up. They got over 30% of the votes in the mid-'70s, that Italy would go communist. It was a kind of a panic. Kissinger was almost hysterical on the subject. Again I think the EUR approach was not the approach of our ambassador in Italy, Dick Gardner who was also getting very concerned about it. The general view in EUR was this is not dangerous. Yes, the Italian communists have a lot of foreign policy positions which are opposed to the United States particularly on the stationing of the intermediate range

missiles which we wanted to station in Italy. If we take too rigid an anti communist attitude, that might make them stronger. Basically I predicted that Euro communism was a passing phase and would not be a major event or process. I think that prediction turned out.

Q: Were you at all involved at this time in the rather traumatic events that were happening in Portugal?

ZIMMERMANN: Not directly, no. That was an extraordinary story, I think, in which we were talking about the importance of the Ambassador on the ground.

Q: Frank Carlucci.

ZIMMERMANN: I think Carlucci made an enormous difference there by keeping his cool. Again Kissinger got quite hysterical about the communists taking over. Basically he had written Portugal off. Carlucci just hammered away and the Germans and other European countries made efforts to strengthen the democratic socialist party in Portugal, and ultimately the communists were marginalized, and Portugal became a democracy which it has been ever since. I think Carlucci had an enormous role.

Q: I did a short interview with Carlucci recently on that, because I think it is another one of the great stories of the foreign service.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes it definitely is. Tad Szulc wrote a long piece in foreign policy on this as I recall, 100 pages long, in which as I recall he gave Carlucci full credit for doing what he did. I visited Lisbon shortly after the communists had been beaten back, and I stayed with Herb Okun who was the DCM under Carlucci. Herb took me around town and there were all kinds of wall paintings and graffiti that said "Death to Carlucci." I mean this was a serious business.

Q: Well what about on the Spanish situation with the Catalans and the Basques? Was there sort of anything we could do, or were these situations where we really had to let it get played out locally?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I think there was, Franco was pretty rough on them, on nationalists. We had a fairly favorable approach to Franco. After he died, there was a successor government which was young people from Franco's entourage. Suarez was the first one. I happened to be in Spain in 1980, this is jumping ahead, to a CSCE meeting. Again, I think the U.S. position toward Franco was perhaps too friendly, but I have to say that whether by design or by accident, Franco provided for political succession which led directly to democracy, to economic prosperity, and to Spain's being embraced by NATO and by the European community. It was a great success story. You had a parallel situation in Yugoslavia, another multi national country on the border of Europe where everything went the opposite way.

Q: Well, were there any other major things you were dealing with at this time, on this policy planning side?

ZIMMERMANN: Let's see. I don't think any other big issues. Euro communism was the one. Euro communism was an obsessive issue. It colored everything. This was the time of the famous Sonnenfeldt doctrine which I played a part in.

Q: What was the Sonnenfeldt doctrine?

ZIMMERMANN: There was a meeting of American chiefs of mission in London. These were your people who were assigned in Europe. I think it was at the time of the NATO meeting. Anyway, Kissinger was there and Sonnenfeldt was there. Kissinger briefed the chiefs of mission on relations with the Soviets and on Euro communism. Sonnenfeldt gave a talk in which he analyzed brilliantly, I thought, the relationship between the Soviets and Eastern Europe. He said, I am shortening, the Soviets are very bad imperialists. If you compare them with the British and the French in the 19th century, they are very bad imperialists because they have established no organic relationship with the countries of Eastern Europe. It is based entirely on power. He said, "Our role, in recognizing they have the preponderance of power in the area, is to try to move these countries into a situation of the sort that Finland is now, in other words to Finlandize Eastern Europe." He used that word. I thought that was neat. I thought it was right on. It was correct, just the right approach. I got home and I said to Hartman, "I'd like to summarize for the embassies in Europe, some of these talks. Kissinger's talk and Sonnenfeldt's talk." He said, "Well the ambassadors were there." I said, "Yes, but as you know, ambassadors don't take notes. They are not going to really have it for their staff. These are really good descriptions of American policy." So Hartman very reluctantly said, "Okay, but clear it." So I wrote these things up including the Sonnenfeldt talk, and sent them up to Sonnenfeldt. He or his assistant cleared everything. It went out. Now, he had said when he used the word Finlandize, he said to the ambassadors in London, "Don't use that word. I don't want that word getting around." So I didn't use it, unfortunately for him. Because if I had, he wouldn't have gotten in trouble. So, the cable went out to all the European posts. It leaked immediately. It leaked in the Pentagon, and I know who did it. Or at least it has been admitted to me who did it. It got in Evans and Novak.

Q: This was the Perle type thing?

ZIMMERMANN: It wasn't Perle as far as I know, but it was somebody like that. It got in Evans and Novak in a Bowdlerized version which was not at all accurate to what Sonnenfeldt had said. It was designed to have Sonnenfeldt imply that the Soviets should have an organic relationship with Eastern Europe and we should help them to do it. In other words, we should help consolidate their role in Eastern Europe which is not at all what Sonnenfeldt had said. This got a lot of publicity. Ultimately Sonnenfeldt had to go down to the press room and defend himself on it. To his credit he had never blamed me. I had written an accurate description of what he said, but he could have very easily have said, "You know, I was misquoted in the cable." He never said that. He and I have

discussed this many times after. A lot of people don't like Hal, but I have to tell you he behaved in an extraordinarily honorable way on that one. This is 1976, presidential campaign. Ronald Reagan running for the Republican nomination gets a hold of this. Sonnenfeldt doctrine. He changed Hal with being an appeaser of the Soviets, and it just stuck. Hal never got another job in the government.

Q: You were there at the end and dealing throughout the Kissinger period. Now, I have gotten from some other people, glimmerings of a summary of how Kissinger looked at the world as compared to a little later. That was, Kissinger, being a European, saw having gone through the trauma of Vietnam, saw essentially a weakened United States and that the Soviet Union because it was a single minded power could probably project itself better than the United States and in many ways we had to reach some sort of an accommodation. I am not talking about a nasty accommodation but in other words we had to almost stop these people to try to either embrace them or do something with them to do this because we were not playing essentially a winning card. Whereas later on you had you might say a Ronald Reagan and others who felt quite differently. How do you think that stacks up from what you know from what you were dealing with?

ZIMMERMANN: I think that is an accurate description. Kissinger, I think, had a profoundly pessimistic view of Europe. He felt Western Europe was weak, was flabby, was not up to the tasks it had to do. That the United States was not able to compete with the Russian arms buildup, and therefore we needed an arms control agreement, not out of strength but because the Russians were building and we weren't. We had to put a cap on it somehow. That was the origin of SALT I and the ABM agreement and so on. I think what Kissinger missed was the power of democratic ideas. He had no faith in what would happen in Portugal that we discussed. He had no faith in what would happen in Italy, thinking communist forces were going to take over.

Q: And it was so like a reaction. Once they went over, they never went back.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right, they never went back. What he missed was that a lot of people don't want to see that kind of thing happen and many times they were prepared to stand up and be counted. So, you got the arms control agreements which I think by the way, were profoundly positive for our own interests. But the motives for them were weakness. You got the wringing of hands and giving up almost in Portugal and Italy. You got the tedious procedural fights with the Europeans over who and how you consult and how you run NATO and how the community interacts with the United States. Very petty stuff, and one looks back on it now with a shudder. The Year of Europe which was a phrase coined in the State Department by Kissinger which turned out to be a year of tremendous scraps with Europe over one thing or another. I think Kissinger was a brilliant Secretary of State. Particularly the China opening was an extraordinary coup. But being a European of the 19th century school, one who understood the balance of power very well but didn't understand that elements of the balance of power have to do with ideas and have to do with democratic values and so forth. I think he missed quite a lot.

Q: Well we will pick this up next time in 1977 and you left Policy Planning and whither?

ZIMMERMANN: To Paris.

Q: Today is October 7, 1997. Warren, we are off to Paris. You were in Paris from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I was in Paris from '77 to '80. It was a bit of a surprise assignment for me. I was working for Arthur Hartman in the European Bureau. He was the assistant secretary for Europe. I had not spent a good deal of my career, much of my career in Western Europe. He became ambassador to Paris, and he asked me to come out as political counselor. So, I had an enormous learning curve to deal with. France is a complicated country. We were there at a fairly complicated time. Giscard d'Estaing was president. While he wasn't the most anti American president France had had, he certainly was very strong on French prestige which he felt, as many of his predecessors had, was being undermined to some degree by American power in the world.

Q: We will get into the policy and the relations with them, but first, what sort of a political section did you have? It seems that often a country like France gets a very large political section and you covered in exquisite detail.

ZIMMERMANN: It is an interesting question. We had a big political section. As foreign service posts go, Paris is one of the largest foreign service posts, of course. There were those who looked at foreign policy issues. Of course France is one of the few countries in the world with a global approach to foreign policy. Then there was a group that looked into internal politics which of course, were very confused and difficult and murky for a foreigner to understand. There were if I recall right, there were about nine people in the section, foreign service officers. But when I got there, I was told that the political section was going to provide cover for the CIA in Paris. The CIA in Paris, I discovered in 1977, was enormous. The reason it was enormous was because the Vietnam war had ended two years before. You had a lot of CIA people they had to place. Given the iron law of good posts, Paris and Rome, posts like that were considered good posts. Of course, there was a serious problem of communism in France as there was in Italy. So, a large number of CIA people, many more I think that were required, gravitated toward Paris. Something like 20 of them ended up nominally in my section, so I was nominally the boss of an enormous political section of some 30 people, 29 or 30 people, 20 of whom I never knew at all. I did insist to the station chief that we have at least one staff meeting to which all these people turned up so I would at least recognize them by face since they were going around the city saying they worked for me. It was a very peculiar arrangement. I was not particularly comfortable about it because occasionally French contacts would come up and say oh we met so and so. He is such a charming person. I would be scrambling around trying to figure out if this was one of the CIA people that I was supposed to know,

and try not to look blank at this person who was telling me about his meeting with somebody who was supposed to work for me.

Q: Well, I can't remember the terminology, but there is covered and uncovered, I mean announced or something like that. When you are in a friendly country you say so and so actually you tell at least somebody that they are part of the CIA apparatus. Do you know how that works?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think that these people were declared to the French secret service which was called the SDEC. That is an acronym. I don't know what it stands for. I think they were declared to the SDEC, but they did operate under what I think was called light cover as political officers in the embassy. Of course the outside world everybody who wasn't in the SDEC including many people in the French government didn't know that they were CIA agents. There was another ground rule also, which was that they assured the French government that they were not targeting French officials, that their targets were third country nationals in France. Of course there were Vietnamese in France, there were Chinese, there were Russians and so forth, so they had plenty of targets.

Q: Well while we are on the subject of CIA, during the time you were there, was there much information that was coming in from them that was of use to you?

ZIMMERMANN: Very little. In fact we often wouldn't know of the information we saw, we wouldn't know what was generated from the Paris station because we would see it in digest, a national intelligence digest that had been prepared in Washington based on sourcing from all around the world. Given the nature of the intelligence game, the sources were never revealed so we would have no way of knowing whether a particular piece of information was generated in Paris or Moscow or wherever. So, I at least, didn't have a keen idea at all of how much of this stuff was coming from the Paris station.

Q: Well this is a theme that runs throughout a good number of the interviews we do. As a practical matter the people often most concerned with a country are those diplomats stationed in the country, and yet the connect between the CIA and the overt political economic officer is very slight.

ZIMMERMANN: It was very slight in the '70s and the '80s. This is jumping head a bit when I was ambassador in Yugoslavia in the early '90s, the station chief came to me one day and told me that they were getting real time intercepts involving Serbian politicians, Yugoslav army, people that we had a tremendous amount of interest in. They hadn't been sharing those intercepts with us, so we didn't know a lot. We didn't have a lot of information that would have been extremely useful to us in our dealings then. At that point they started giving it to us. That was how we knew it existed. We didn't know it existed before. When they gave it to us, of course, it was very useful. I understood that from my colleagues in Bucharest in 1989 which was the year of the coup when Ceausescu was overthrown, that the CIA station started giving the ambassador intercepts which were

of course, tremendously valuable to letting him make up his mind about how the coup was going and the direction it was going in and what would happen to Ceausescu and so forth. But the CIA behaved in a rather arrogant way before that, keeping embassy and ambassadors in the dark about information which could have been very useful to them.

Q: In the embassy, how did Art Hartman operate?

ZIMMERMANN: I served three times with him, once in the European bureau, and twice in embassies, in Paris and in Moscow. He was one of the great ambassadors of the post war period to my mind because he had a tremendous fund of historical and economic and political knowledge which he wore very lightly. He had a remarkable way of dealing with people, not threatening, very relaxed but extremely geared to understanding what was going on. He was very well liked by virtually everybody who worked for him. He gave his officers a lot of scope. He expected them to set high standards for themselves. He expected them to get the job done. He gave good direction about the kinds of things that he wanted. The two embassies I served with him in were both very happy embassies. Neither Paris nor Moscow had long time reputations for being happy embassies for different reasons. Paris, because people get frustrated dealing with the French, and Moscow because you were dealing with an adversary all the time. So much of what would be considered normal life was out of bounds or restricted. But Hartman scored very high on morale in both of those places. I think it was because of his own professionalism and his confidence in his staff that they would exercise a similar kind of professionalism.

Q: What about Hartman in dealing with the French in your observation?

ZIMMERMANN: Hartman had a very good way of dealing with the French. He understood that the U.S. French relationship is traditionally a conflicted relationship, and to some degree has to be because to a degree French policy in the world is formulated on the assumption that the United States is an adversary and has to be treated as an adversary. At the same time France was one of our most important allies in Europe. It had a nuclear capability which was certainly an asset on the NATO side against the Soviet nuclear capability. So, it was very important to find areas of cooperation with the French, and it was equally important to take the French along when our feeling was that they were going too far in their willingness to overlook American interests. So, it was a balancing act all the time. I think Hartman did it very well. Others in the post war period have done it well, as well. I think the only other professional ambassador we had in the post war period, Charles Bohlen did it extremely well. It involves not making an enemy of the French. It also involves not falling for their nationalistic line too heavily. We discovered that Washington was uniformly anti French. That you could never make a mistake in Washington if you took an anti French position, so we and Hartman had a lot of problems in convincing Washington that the French weren't all bad. There were some assets that the French had which were of great interest to the United States. I mentioned the nuclear capability. Also the French had tremendous influence in Africa, and in those days we had as great an interest as they did in keeping in power African leaders who were prepared to

deal cooperatively with the west on the economic plane, with Africa's minerals for example. Mobutu in Zaire was kept afloat partly by the French. There was a tremendous American sigh of relief at that because we didn't have to do it. We wanted to; we didn't have to do it because the French did it for us. They did that in other places in west Africa as well, basically taking the responsibility for supporting some fairly unsavory characters at the head of African states for economic reasons. That meant that we didn't have to take the brunt of that. So the French did some objectively valuable things from Washington's point of view. Washington never seemed to either recognize it or be grateful for it.

Q: Apropos that, an interview I did recently with Jack Mendelsohn who is teaching at the Naval Academy for two years. During about this period saying the word in the navy was in case there was a real crisis with the Soviet Union, the first thing to do is to sink the French nuclear submarines because, not that they had anything against the French navy but they didn't trust French politicians, and they didn't know what they would do.

ZIMMERMANN: And you know, there is an interesting corollary to that. In the 1970s we had a very secret program between the French navy and our own navy in which we provided the French the technology to make their submarines quiet so they couldn't be as easily detected by the Soviets. It was such in those days such a clandestine program that very few people in the U.S. government knew about it. I found out about it only later myself. But what we were doing was giving the French very sensitive technology. That was based on the assumption that they were on our side and not on the other side. I think it was the right thing to do. It was the smart thing to do. The French in a pinch were going to be on our side. There is no doubt at all about that. But I think what Jack Mendelsohn is describing is kind of jokey sniping that was very prevalent.

Q: Well it is again a theme that runs through our interviews. I always have fun talking about relations with the French because it is not a really cordial relationship most of the time.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. It's a love hate relationship. The French, don't forget, they are our oldest allies. They sent us Lafayette and helped George Washington. We have never fought a war with the French ever.

Q: A quasi naval war.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. But the British, whom we feel much closer to, we have tangled with several times, and nearly again during the Civil War period. They were hoping the South would win.

Q: Well back to Arthur Hartman, how did he connect on the social side, because I take it society plays a larger role in France than it does in the United States. I think social cultural is what I am really talking about.

ZIMMERMANN: Hartman was tremendously successful on the social side because he shared a lot of interests with the French. He is an enormously cultured man himself with a really deep love of music and art. It wasn't faked and the French understood that, so they cottoned to that very quickly. I mean they understood that this American ambassador was someone who really did have a deep understanding of some of the cultural things that they cared about as well. I might add that Hartman's wife Donna, was equally this way. She was genuinely interested in music and art, and liked going to openings of art exhibits and liked going to concerts. They were seen around a lot doing that, and I think that made them very well liked.

Q: You had never served in France had you?

ZIMMERMANN: No, never had.

Q: As political counselor so often you get somebody, my experience was in Italy where you had people coming back for the third or fourth time usually as each time a little higher up in rank so by the time one is say equivalent to political or economic counselor, they are really well versed in French, I mean Italian politics. France is a complicated place. How did you bring yourself up to speed?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I read everything I could get my hands on when I heard I was going. I always did that. I would read as much history as I could, contemporary analysis of the political scene and so forth. Talked to professors who dealt with France. When I got out there, of course, the political section consisted of many people who knew France extremely well. Their brains were there to be picked. That was very useful indeed. Phil Rizik who was the head of the internal section, had a long association with France. He had attended the Ecole Nationale d'Administration, the elite French management school. He had relatives who were French. A couple of times a week, he would take a French politician and me out to lunch. We would go out to lunch together and talk about politics. After a couple of months of that, I was pretty well steeped in at least the political gossip that is the basis for getting more deeply into what is happening in France. I had also read European history at Cambridge, and had taught European history so I had some grounding in France's role in Europe and in the world. If you don't know a country first hand, I think there is no substitute for talking with as many people as you can. I am a great believer in getting out of the embassy and talking to people, seeing as many people as you can, getting into as many political conversations as you can. I discovered that, here again it is an interesting paradox with U.S. French relationship, I could pick up the phone and call virtually anybody in France short of the President or the prime minister and invite them for lunch, and they'd come. As the political counselor, I was not the top person in the embassy. But the job was interesting enough for French journalists or French politicians or French officials so that you could get them for lunch virtually any time you wanted them. That was fascinating to be able to talk to people who were in the power structure in one way or another. They were very glad to come.

Q: I am trying to weave a little trade craft in here. When you have a lunch like this in France, how would you use it and how would they use it, the person you had over use it?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I had a very nice apartment. So, I would typically invite a guest to the apartment for lunch. It would be just the two of us again typically. I would, normally consult well in advance with other people in the political section: who should we have, who would be interesting to have. They would give me names and reasons why these were interesting people. So, by the time I invited them I had a pretty fair idea of what I wanted to get out of them. It might be the man in the socialist party--they were out of power in those days, who was in charge of their foreign policies. I would want to know where they differed with Giscard and the conservatives on foreign policy. If there was a major issue brewing, as for example there was during my time with the Camp David Accords, to get their take on that and how they saw that. So, there was a set of I wanted to get at that my staff would help me work out. But sometimes the conversation would go off on all kinds of different things, and I felt particularly that if this was somebody I really wanted to get to know, that the last thing I wanted to do was just bore in with one question after another. I would try to find out a little bit about them, what they were really interested in, how they spent their vacations, that kind of thing, in hopes they would come back or they would invite me, and we could establish a closer relationship based not just on trading secrets.

Q: Were they interested in how the United States operated particularly since you were there during the Carter administration which is a somewhat off beat one from previous administrations?

ZIMMERMANN: They didn't understand Carter. They found his zeal for human rights very strange and his Christian fundamentalist background, they couldn't understand at all. They certainly understood Kissinger. They hated him, but they understood him much more easily than they did Carter. They had tremendous interest in the United States, the French did. There was a growing amount of French tourism in the United States, not only the people we would see who gravitated toward the American embassy but middle class French people in general. They would love to go to the United States. They would always do three things. One is they would go to New York. The second is they would go to New Orleans for obvious reasons. The third is they would go to the west. What the French liked about America is the American west because there is nothing like it. They were just fascinated with that. There are a lot of kind of French novels that are about the west, cowboy stories by Frenchmen in French.

Q: Sort of like the Carl May type in German.

ZIMMERMANN: A lot like that. The French were interested in our technology. They were interested in our business schools. They were interested in how American finance and business worked. There were really a lot of points of contact. I recall Servan-Schreiber who was one of the major French journalists wrote a book called the "The American Challenge." That was in the '60s I think.

Q: It was quite popular here in the United States.

ZIMMERMANN: Tremendous book. Basically it said the Americans are destroying us. They are just too powerful economically. They are just going to turn us all into a bunch of satellites. Well I think that kind of approach generated a tremendous interest in France and what was going on in the United States. Of course we didn't destroy them; we didn't bury them that way at all. But they did see that we were ahead in all kinds of ways, particularly economic and business and finance, and they wanted to know firsthand what was going on. So, I think the French American relationship has grown a lot more positive and a lot deeper. There will always be the squabbles at the top because of the way France defines its national values, but I think it is a fundamentally sound relationship, and I think Art Hartman certainly contributed to that by his very close understanding of the French. He had spent many years in France before he became ambassador. He had been there during the Marshall Plan year when we were helping put France on its feet after all. There were a lot of people who remember that as well.

Q: How important did you find the French intellectual class? Because unlike almost anywhere else except perhaps the Soviet Union, I can't think of anywhere where there is sort of a defined intellectual class.

ZIMMERMANN: It is tremendously important, and it dominates the press, even what we would call the tabloid press, the popular press. There are always intellectuals writing columns in it. There are interminable television programs, talking heads type of programs where the intellectuals watter on all kinds of subjects. So, the intellectual is really a very important figure. You have, the French Academy which elects intellectuals. Intellectuals are taken very seriously in France. There is a lot of arrogance that they have because of this. I had some trepidation going to France because I worried a little bit about my French. It wasn't perfect, and I worried about these French intellectuals. A friend of mine in Washington, Simon Serfaty, who was French, he is a Pied noir from Algeria actually or Morocco. He is a professor at Johns Hopkins school of advanced international studies. He said, "Let me give you some advice about French intellectuals which will help you enormously when you are dealing with them." He said this. "Bear in mind at all times that they are clowns. They are clowns in the sense that they are always trying to make an effect. They are always trying to cause a stir. It may have nothing to do with what they really believe or what is really true." He said, "If you keep that in mind as they talk at you and try to impress you, you won't go wrong." I thought about that a lot, and indeed to a large degree he was right because a lot of this was just for show. They were putting things on. If you saw through it and could deal with it, then you could get on a much more serious basis with them and there would be much less pretense and everything would be fine.

Q: Did you find in dealing with the French intellectual class, because you say they are important so this is obviously a group you want to win their respect and to insert sort of the American viewpoint hoping that this will at least make some difference. Did you find this was possible or were they too busy making posture?

ZIMMERMANN: Most of the time they were available. As I said you could call up anybody and there was a chance they would come. This was true of the intellectuals as well. They enjoyed showing off for the Americans. They liked it a lot, so they would come around for a one-on-one lunch, or they would come to a reception that the ambassador would give. There was no problem there. But, the very left wing ones were sometimes harder to attract, but you could do it. Usually, sometimes at least with a French intermediary saying, Well I know this person, let's go together you know, to some bistro and we'll talk. That worked as well.

Q: Did you find the French train of thought which is, I may be wrong as a Cartesian? Is that the correct term. Anyway, there is always a plan behind everything, and things just don't happen. I recall almost a conspiracy theory or something of this nature. Is this something you had to deal with?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, you said a couple of different things there. Certainly the French manner of argument appears very logical, and I think that is why it is called Cartesian. You build up from a basis and you draw one conclusion and that leads to another conclusion. This is all fine if the basis from which you build is correct. If the basis from which you build is wrong, all the logic in the world is not going to make it right. It actually can take it even a wronger and wronger. That often happens with the French. So, they have no monopoly on logical thought although it is quite beautiful to watch a Frenchman develop an argument. By the way, French politicians are the most brilliant speakers I have ever heard anywhere in my life, almost never speaking with notes. They can talk half an hour, an hour, two hours brilliantly developing one point after another in perfectly logical progression. I never heard anything like it. They all can do it. Mitterrand was one of the best. He was the head of the socialist party which was in opposition. He hadn't become president yet. He was brilliant. Couve de Murville, who had been De Gaulle's foreign minister, a wonderful old man, was at a lunch given by a group of diplomats. I heard him give an hour and a half speech without notes on the current foreign policy situation in France, while he was boning and eating a trout. It was an extraordinary performance. They all have this talent. Now, I think this is the Cartesian side. You talked about conspiracies and so forth. The French are Latins after all, and there is a kind of a tendency I think, in Latin countries, to believe that there is an answer for everything. Nothing is by chance and if something happens, it is because somebody willed it to happen. If nobody comes forward to say they willed it to happen, then it is a plot. That kind of thing was very prevalent. A lot of what we had to do in the embassy was to beat down these conspiracy theories about the Carter administration doing one thing or another because it was anti-French or it was thinking about ways it could score points off the French. Most countries big as well as little tend to think that people in Washington think about nothing except their country, and that therefore everything that is done has some reference to their country whereas, most of the time, of course, it doesn't at all.

Q: About the issues, let's start sort of with the progression of the major Carter initiatives. How about the neutron bomb, I am thinking about the so called neutron bomb, did this raise any hackles?

ZIMMERMANN: The neutron bomb fiasco, I think caused the French to write off Carter. They just decided they were dealing with a second rate amateur who didn't understand anything. I think after that they didn't take him seriously. Then when he got on his human rights kick they dropped him down still another notch.

Q: Could you explain how the neutron bomb thing, because this is for sort of the historical part.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I don't remember all the details very well anymore, but Carter as I recall, was trying to get the Germans to take the neutron bomb which was advertised as something that didn't kill people but it just...

Q: Well, it killed people but not property. It had more radiation.

ZIMMERMANN: Is that what it was? Okay, kill people but not property.

Q: Sort of the ultimate capitalist weapon.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, and the Germans as I recall, were totally resistant. It was the Schmidt government, and Carter really didn't know when to stop and just kept going. The French were very close to the Germans in those days as they have been lots in recent days as well. I am sure Giscard was getting all this from Schmidt. The two were very close; spoke to each other in English, by the way. I think the conclusion the French drew was not, whether the neutron bomb was a mistake or not a mistake, but they just felt that Carter and Brzezinski his National Security advisor just loved to lecture the Europeans on what they should do. The neutron bomb was an example of that. They weren't understanding the signals back from the Europeans that they really didn't want to get into this. So., I think it was a question of style more than substance. That the French saw Carter and Brzezinski and company as insensitive to Europe, as arrogant, as fixated on the Russian threat too much, and basically not competent to deal with the problems of the time.

Q: Human rights, could you talk about how you were trying to explain the human rights policy, and also what was the attitude of our embassy because when the human rights policy first came, I mean real emphasis. It has always been kind of there. There was a certain amount of resistance within the foreign service. You know, human rights it is all fine, we are all for it, but gee we have other fish to fry in our foreign relations. Could you explain how it hit you all?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, well in one sense human rights has always been an element of American foreign policy right back to the Declaration of Independence which of course, was based on rather fundamental human rights. But it had never been an official part of the policy. When Carter came in he started a bureau for human rights. The Congress was

very exercised about this. Everyone forgets the Congress provided a great deal of initiative.

Q: That's right, even prior to the Carter administration.

ZIMMERMANN: And the French who are pretty cynical anyway and who believe that diplomacy is designed to advance one's state interests and not one's values, took a pretty dim view of it. Partly because they felt it would damage the western relationships with the Russians because we were beginning to turn our attention to human rights violations in Russia. The Helsinki Final Act had already been signed in 1975 which provided a license for that. Partly, I think, the French felt that human rights was going to undermine the stability of important parts of the world like Iran where the Shah was beginning to come under some criticism. The French saw it as a kind of a childish approach to the adult game of diplomacy which had to do with things like the balance of power and realpolitik and Machiavelli and God save us not Thomas Jefferson and people, fuzzy thinkers like that.

Q: How about the embassy to begin with because you arrived early in the Carter administration was taking hold. Did you have problems with the bureau of Human rights or anything. I mean was it hard in a way to turn the ship of the embassy around to really focus on this?

ZIMMERMANN: Well I don't think we really did focus on it too much. In the first place France was not a big human rights violator except by extension in places like Africa where I mentioned before, they were helping us out to some degree as well. So it didn't hit us very hard there. I think Hartman's view was that human rights had a place but shouldn't be allowed to dominate relationships which we probably much more important in other areas. So, I can't say that it was a major issue in our bilateral relations with the French, except that the French looking at Carter's approach to human rights felt that it was hopelessly naive and possibly dangerous in areas like Iran where they felt very strongly that the Shah was the final protection between all that oil and chaos.

Q: What about focusing on before we move to Iran, focusing on the Israel Arab connection. This is the period of Camp David and all. The French have always maintained they have an interest in that area. How did this work? Were there tensions?

ZIMMERMANN: There were tensions. The French were very critical of Camp David. I think both the government and the opposition thought that it was not a comprehensive agreement, that it didn't deal with the whole issue. Well, you know, there is merit in that. I have heard some American Arabists say the same thing. On the other hand, it was a major partial agreement that took Egypt totally out of the war.

Q: It ended the war potential in that area.

ZIMMERMANN: It really did. I will say that Sadat's visit to Jerusalem was probably watched on television by everybody in France. It was an enormous evocative and

emotional experience for the French when Sadat did that. But, in the middle east, we have always been, we have always had problems with the French because the French have always wanted to be major players in the middle east, and to some degree they have been, particularly in Lebanon where they have been the traditional protectors of the Christians. They have always been very nervous about American policy because of that. They have also tended to pick up Arab countries that they think can be useful to them and give them a kind of an entrance into the area and Saddam Hussein's Iraq was one of those countries in the late '70s. The French gave him if you recall, a nuclear reactor which the Israelis took out. The French were very critical of us for not understanding how useful countries like Iraq could be. I put it down mainly to a genuine rivalry they felt they had with us in the middle east. We had more cards to play than they did, but they wanted to be players. They had been traditional players in the middle east going back centuries, and they wanted to get in anywhere they could, and they saw us as a kind of an obstacle to it, so I think geopolitically that was more or less the way it was.

Q: How did this translate itself?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I don't think any damage was really done. The French unlike the Soviets, the French did not actively try to undermine the initiatives that the Carter administration was taking as far as I can remember. They grouched a lot; they complained a lot. They poked holes in the obviously imperfect agreement that had been reached at Camp David, but I don't think they did any real damage.

Q: In dealing with this, say with the Quai d'Orsay, did you find that the professional French diplomat and their apparatus in the foreign ministry and it had a different view than the government in a way? Was this on a more professional level or was it all in sync?

ZIMMERMANN: It was in pretty good sync then partly because you had the same party in the presidency as you had in the Parliament. The majority party, Giscard had in the parliament and he was the President. Of course, it has been very different in more recent years when you had a divided presidency and government. The prime minister was Giscard's man, Raymond Barre. Things worked pretty smoothly I'd say, but Giscard had a tiny national security staff when compared with the United States it was ludicrous, it was about five people. But some of them were on loan from French diplomacy, French diplomatic service, so I would guess it worked pretty closely. I would say we had good relations with the Quai d'Orsay. They weren't enormously warm, and on some issues there was a serious problem. I recall that, when the presidency country of the European Community as it was then called changed and the French took it over, EUR sent us a cable saying they were going to send somebody out from the European bureau who had been traditionally consulting with the incoming president of the European Community about arrangements for future consultation. We got this cable. They didn't ask us; they just said he was coming and gave us arrival information and so forth. One of the officers in the political section, Jack Maresca, knew France very well, married to a French woman, said, "The French won't receive him." I said, "What do you mean they won't

receive him?" He said, "They won't receive him because their view is they have no obligation to consult with the United States on matters involving the European Community." I said, "C'mon [Come on] Jack, I just don't believe that." Well the guy arrived and we sent over, first of all we called, and then I guess we sent a note to the foreign ministry saying what he was doing. It came back we won't receive him, and they didn't. He sat for three days in Paris cooling his heels trying to get an appointment in the foreign ministry, they would not see him. The French were furious at Kissinger for his approach to the U.S. right to know not only what the Europeans are doing but to get into their decision making process. They just stonewalled on that, and that was one of those issues on which they were not going to move. Another issue on which they were not going to move and on which they were very Gaullist was cooperation in NATO in a military sense. Anything beyond their presence on the political side of NATO was simply not going to do. Any efforts we made to lure them into something larger than that were very strongly rebuffed.

Q: Well, you know, during part of this time I was Consul General in Naples, and NATO South was located there, and Admiral Crow was commander. I remember asking him about French cooperation in the Mediterranean. He said, "It's our main other force other than the Americans." It is very close; we work very well together, but they just don't talk about it very much."

ZIMMERMANN: If you had left it to the French military without the politicians interfering, they would have been back in NATO for decades. I mean they loved cooperating with NATO and particularly with the Americans. That was certainly true while I was there. There was a wonderful French chief of staff named General Neri who was extremely friendly to the American military and to NATO. He went about as far as he could go within the Gaullist straitjacket, and I think that has been very typical of the French military. But, you know, for political reasons, because of De Gaulle and because French politicians have felt very nationalistic about this, the military has not been allowed to cooperate.

Q: Did you find during this time a difference between the approach towards the United States between the Gaullists and the Socialists?

ZIMMERMANN: Really only a very small difference. The socialists being out of power, had nothing but time. We spent a lot of time with them. They were always available for, meals or whatever you wanted, even for exchange visits. I think by the time we were finished with sending socialists to the United States on exchange visits, we had taken care of the entire hierarchy of the socialist party. When they came into power, virtually every member of the cabinet had been at least six weeks in the United States in the last five or ten years. It was fantastic. But, you know, they were Gaullists too. A little bit softer maybe about it, but they had very strong Gaullist tendencies. Mitterrand moved it a little bit toward some cooperation with NATO and Chirac has moved it a little bit more, but I don't think there has been a tremendous difference. between the socialists and the

conservatives on these bedrock French nationalistic issues. I think there is still a tremendous degree of Gaullism that's there on all sides, even with the communists.

Q: What about, talking about the communists, what was you, do we have contacts with the communists, and what was your impression of the communists at that particular time?

ZIMMERMANN: I think this was done in Rome too, you would remember this. We had one relatively junior officer in the political section who was authorized to have contacts with the communists and who would see them. The communists had an appointed person to talk to the American embassy. It was a fellow who was responsible for their foreign policy brief, and our guy in the political section happened to be Chuck Redman who went on to be ambassador to Germany, would meet this fellow a couple of times a month probably. Once or twice, and I think we had to get Washington's permission for this. Once or twice Chuck would take me with him and so raise the level a little bit of how we met them. It was totally unproductive really, because they would give you their line on everything. It was absolutely standard stuff. French communists, of course, were much worse than Italian communists, less sophisticated and harder line and more pro Soviet.

Q: Did you have the feeling, I mean, that this was really Soviet controlled group or?

ZIMMERMANN: I wouldn't have said Soviet controlled, just like minded. They had very a hard, and we thought at that point irreducible, baie among French workers. They always got about 15% in elections, not much less I think. They could always count on that. They were always quite important, and of course, Mitterrand used them and abused them brilliantly. He used them to get to power because the socialists couldn't make it on their own, so he needed the coalition of the communists. When he got to power he dumped them. He always said he would. Our policy was strongly to dissuade Mitterrand from his coalition with the communists. In fact we couldn't have been wronger because it was the best way of all to destroy the communist party in France, and Mitterrand marginalized them in a way that would never have been possible if he hadn't aligned with them to begin with.

Q: Within the political section, were we thinking in those terms, or did we sort of have the mindset that any communist in any cabinet is going to be a mole who is going to divulge all the secrets and all that?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I think our approach and Hartman's approach in the political section was may I say less rigid than that. I mean if you made a communist defense minister, you would be in trouble. But no, no French government was going to do that. I think this rather frenzied campaign against French and Italian communism, particularly Italian communism which had much deeper roots than the French did, was ill advised. I don't think they were the threat that we thought they were, and I don't think we made it better by taking on this crusader like stance against them. It antagonized the French government when we were doing this, and certainly it antagonized Mitterrand and the French socialists that we took this position. I expect the same was true in Italy. I actually

had done quite a lot of work on eurocommunism as it was then called when I was back in the department doing policy stuff in the mid-'70s. I reached the conclusion they were simply not as important as the whole scholarly community and the whole governmental community thought they were. I think that proved to be right.

Q: Did you have much contact with Mitterrand during this period?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I didn't personally, but Hartman did. It was always very formal. Mitterrand was a very formal person, and Hartman would invite him to his residence, which was a wonderful old Rothschild palace for lunch. It maybe happened three or four times during the time we were there. It was always a very rigid thing. Mitterrand would bring his chief aides, many of whom later became prime minister, like Fabius and Jospin. They were all very young; they were all in their 30s in those days. He would bring them, and Hartman would bring us political people. The conversation was always a bit stilted and wooden and never flowed freely at all. When you would get to know the socialists who worked for Mitterrand, you could see them one on one or in small groups, they were very easy to talk to, and they were fine. But, with him, they were all intimidated by him for one thing, and for another, he was just a very formal person. I don't think he was a great fan of the United States or of Carter or of American policy or of America's role in the world. I don't think he had a lot to say for any of that.

Q: What about the nationalists, Le Pen and that group at that point?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't recall they were a major organization. I think that was a bit later, although Le Pen was certainly on the scene, but we didn't take him too seriously in those days.

Q: What about the press?

ZIMMERMANN: French press, the ones who did foreign policy were very interested in seeing us and were quite often very good sources for things that were going on. You have different gradations of French press. In a way the top gradation consisted of one person, Raymond Aron, who was still alive in those days and writing columns for I think it was Figaro. I mean this was a man with the stature of Walter Lippmann or maybe even higher. He was an extraordinary man. A really deep thinker, a brilliant conversationalist, funny, profound, just a delight to be around. He was not well, but he would come quite often to the embassy. His journalism was at a level that nobody else attained. Then you had kind of the people who were genuine foreign policy experts like Andre Fontaine who wrote a column for Le Monde and others. They were the barons of French foreign policy journalism. Again they came around. We saw a lot of them.

Q: Did they pick your brains did you find?

ZIMMERMANN: No, never. No, they never needed to talk to us. These people did not beat the bushes to get stories from the American embassy. Now, others did. You drop

another level down and you got working journalists who would be interested in genuine exchange. You have lunch with them; they ask you questions, you ask them questions, sort of the way it normally works with journalists, but these were the ones below the barons.

Q: Well how did you find the press, particularly the barons and all? Were they particularly with the Carter administration dubious or what?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, yes, virtually unanimously anti for one reason or another. I don't think Carter had any journalistic support that I can remember in France either from the left or the right.

Q: Turning to a very difficult not only a year but a month, December of 1979, you were there. I mean we had two things happen, one was our embassy was taken over, or maybe it is November was taken over in Iran, and then we had the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. First on Iran, how was the overthrow of the Shah viewed in France, and the American position there?

ZIMMERMANN: Well I said that one of the reasons the French didn't like Carter's human rights policy was because they were afraid it would undermine regimes like the Shah's. The French are also, can be very realistic. I do recall this is one of the few contributions that the embassy made to really good information. Talking to French people at the Quai who were getting reports from their embassy in Tehran and particularly their military attaché in Tehran who had a very good in with the Shah's army. They had concluded long before we did that the Shah was finished. I remember the word that was used, that he is "traumatize," the Shah is traumatized, he has lost his will, that he is about to become history. This was a period in which Brzezinski particularly was pushing very hard to keep the Shah in power. He sent high level military people down to talk the Iranian military and so forth. Keep the Shah in power and protect our investment by keeping the Shah in. The French had essentially given up on him, and they made a major decision when Khomeini, who I think had been in Iraq, wanted to go to France, and the question was whether the French would let him come in. They decided to do it. Now, I don't recall that we tried to talk the French out of it. Certainly we didn't do it in Paris. It would have been at a high level and maybe in Washington, but Khomeini going to France was a major event, of course. He brought his whole retinue, and then people began to join him in France, intellectuals and so forth. At that point there was a dispute between Vance and Brzezinski over how we play Iran. Vance wanted to send an emissary to talk to the Khomeini people, find out what they were like, to try to see if there was any basis for cooperation, and Brzezinski was strongly opposed to that. So, we kept getting these conflicting signals in Paris. They were going to send Ted Eliot who spoke Farsi. He had been assigned to Iran early in his career. He was going to come; he would stay with me so as not to attract attention. He wasn't going to stay at the residence. He would talk to the Khomeini people. It turned out that that visit got killed somehow. Then it was decided that somebody in our embassy would do it. Our middle east expert was not an Iranian expert, but he had been political counselor in Saudi Arabia, and he knew the region quite

well. But he was having his appendix out. So Hartman said, "Why don't you do it?" So I ended up being the first American intermediary between the Khomeini people and the United States government. It was a chilling experience. This all happened in the two weeks before Khomeini flew back to Iran. As I recall, I think I had seven meetings. They were all with Ibrahim Yazdi who when Khomeini went back to Iran became the first foreign minister of the Khomeini regime. Yazdi was a physician in Houston. He had been a student revolutionary in the Mossadegh period, had either been exiled or had fled the country. He went to Houston and got an MD and had been a doctor practicing in Houston for all this time, so he was an American. When Khomeini got to France Yazdi came back with a number of other people. There was some question as to who I should try to see, and Washington decided that I should try to see Yazdi. The other people that they thought maybe I should try to see were Gotzbadeh or Banisada both of them later became foreign ministers. Gotzbadeh was later executed for being too pro American. But the view of Washington was that he was anti American and therefore you shouldn't see him, you should see Yazdi instead. I can't remember how I made contact. It may have been through the French. We were telling the French this and of course they were helpful, or they were sympathetic. But anyway I went out. I took Hartman's private car, his Peugeot which didn't have diplomatic plates. They were staying in a village outside of Paris, about 10 miles outside of Paris. They had taken over virtually all the inns in the village, and Yazdi had one inn to himself, he had taken over the whole thing himself and his aides and bodyguards and so forth. He told me to go to this place, to this inn. Down I went. He greeted me, and there was a bodyguard at his side. I go in and there was this large dining room empty except for this one guy sitting at a table, and that was Yazdi. I had a set of questions I had been instructed to ask about Khomeini's views on one thing or another. I would ask Yazdi the questions; he would not attempt to answer any of them. He would say I will take these and call me tomorrow or call me in two days and we will arrange another meeting and I will have answers for you. That was how it worked. What happened was obviously he would take the questions to Khomeini.

Q: Would you give him a list?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't recall I gave him pieces of paper. I think I would read the question or would ask them. He took careful notes. So that's how it worked. This is all in Vance's memoirs in detail that As I recall we wanted to know whether Khomeini would have any flexibility in dealing with people who had been in the Shah's regime particularly with the military, so one of the questions was would you be able to cooperate with any members of the general staff, something like that. So I gave them to Yazdi and the answer came back. The answer was something like these generals are all traitors and the only thing that is good enough for them is to be executed and so of course we won't have anything to do with them. Then we wanted to know what Khomeini's relationship if he came into power with the United States would be, how he saw his relationship in the middle east with the Arab countries, Israel and so forth. Well the answer came back, "Israel should be wiped off the face of the earth." It was really chilling. He didn't have much nice to say about the Arab countries either, particularly Egypt and some of the others. One question was whether they were prepared to have a correct relationship with

the United States. He didn't exclude it, but we said will expect a lot of assistance and we will expect understanding in our Islamist policies. It was a guarded green light, maybe an amber light. They were then at that point getting close to flying to Tehran, so the meetings ended. I had just been reporting this stuff verbatim to Washington. I sent a cable, saying that I wasn't the world's foremost expert on Iran, but I was pretty sure that these people were not going to be friends of ours. Yazdi went back, became foreign minister, played a useful role.

Q: Prime minister or foreign minister?

ZIMMERMANN: Foreign minister I think. Yes, it was foreign minister. Played a useful role in trying to negotiate the hostages out, but failed. I think he was in fact a moderate and did his best. I think he is still around; he hasn't been killed. He is still there. But it was an extraordinary experience.

Q: Well when the hostage crisis developed, this would have been November or December '79, what was the French reaction when our embassy was taken over?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't remember. I do know that the typical French approach to hostages is to buy them out. In practice at least they are totally opposed to our declaratory policy of not dealing with terrorists. They deal like mad. But I can't remember how they reacted to this.

Q: I was just wondering we were going around trying to get support which essentially we got from almost everybody. Not that it did a hell of a lot of good. You didn't find yourself shuttling back and forth the French saying maybe we can help you and that sort of thing?

ZIMMERMANN: No there was some rather, there was some unofficial French lawyers and whatnot who claimed to have ins with the Iranian regime and could help with the hostages. They didn't get any official support from the French government as far as I know. Pierre Salinger was very much involved with these characters, and this appeared in his memoirs too that he had a contact with a lawyer named Charon. He eventually called me up. Pierre said, "Would you see him?" I said, "Sure I'll see him." So Charon came over and spent three or four hours. He had this plan. He knew somebody in the Iranian government. Of course he couldn't say who, and they were going to help. It never came to anything.

Q: I think there were many from other countries and everywhere else. Everybody had a plan.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, now Henry Precht used to come a lot.

Q: He was the desk...

ZIMMERMANN: He was the office director. Henry said to himself that he was going to work every day of his life until the hostages were free. He did not take a day off, Saturday, Sunday, until they were freed. Henry came several times because they had various people they were meeting in Paris. Some of them were French; some of them weren't. Some were Argentinean. A lot of low life people who had some sort of angle and who felt that for money they could get something done. Henry was pursuing every one of these leads. I don't think they ever ended up anywhere, but he would come secretly to Paris. I think again the French government knew about it and were helpful. He would meet these people, and occasionally stayed, no I guess he didn't stay with me. Anyway, he always let us know when he came and would fill us in on how things were going. He would bring a little group of people, four or five people, interpreters and whatnot. They came quite a lot.

Q: Warren, what about the Christmastime 1979 Soviet take over in Afghanistan? This caused all sorts of things, but what was the initial French reaction to this?

ZIMMERMANN: Again I am not entirely clear. My memory isn't too good on this. I think the French were appalled at it. I recall reading a memorandum of a meeting that Vance had with his French, German, and British counterparts in the fall of 1979 before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The possibility of the invasion was already being discussed. Vance was trying to calm the other foreign ministers down by saying that if they do something, let's not overreact to it. Of course, the reaction by the Carter administration when it came was very strong. I just don't remember how the French felt either about the Olympics. I think they didn't send a team to the Olympics.

Q: I am not sure.

ZIMMERMANN: The British did. I think the grain embargo, again I am just guessing, they would not have liked. They were not keen on that sort of thing. I think they did follow us on the Olympics. That could be checked. If that is the case, then that is a pretty strong gesture of support since the British didn't. The British sent a team.

Q: I was wondering let's say prior to this and follow through after, was there a change in the perception of the Soviet Union? There was the so called Brezhnev Doctrine which was sort of what's mine is mine and what's yours is negotiable. But Brezhnev was literally on his last legs at that point. What was the feeling about whether the Soviet Union was a considered no longer much of a threat with people you would be talking to in France?

ZIMMERMANN: I think they assumed that the Soviets considered Afghanistan as part of their sphere of influence. I don't think there would have been enormous shock or surprise at the Soviets doing it. The situation was a little different when the Brezhnev Doctrine was applied to Eastern Europe. This is not so much the French foreign office which was not surprised or alarmed at the Soviet view of how they had to control Eastern Europe. But, there was tremendous feeling among intellectuals in France that the Soviet invasion of Hungary, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the Soviet rape of Poland, the Soviet

control over Eastern Europe was unconscionable, a terrible violation of sovereignty and rights and had to be dealt with. This was a very hot button for French intellectuals. The French intellectuals felt that way, and by the way, French intellectuals on both the left and the right, and if they felt that way, then the French government had to deal with it. So they couldn't be totally cynical about Eastern Europe. As far as Afghanistan went, I think that they didn't see serious French interests there, they understood, they had no illusions about the Soviets. They understood this is the way the Soviets are likely to behave.

Q: What about China? Was the making better relations when Carter came in and he recognized China, Nixon had made the first step and this was sort of the second step. Did the French welcome that?

ZIMMERMANN: I think so, yes. As I recall that was not a problem.

Q: Did we have any particular issues in Africa with say Libya or any other places when you were there?

ZIMMERMANN: As I mentioned, the French by protecting their own assets in Africa as they did several times during the 1970s particularly Zaire, were doing us a favor because there was a lot of American investment in the minerals in Africa, and the French were essentially using military force to protect that investment. In fact, if you look around the world, there were very few areas where we were in conflict with the French. They didn't like Carter's style. They felt politically threatened when he made his bold move at Camp David. They rebuffed any efforts to bring them closer to NATO, but they didn't get any farther away during the Carter administration. I think they basically shared our view of the Soviets. The secretary general of the foreign ministry when I was there was a man named Soutou who had served in Moscow. He had been ambassador there. He was very anti Soviet. So they weren't soft on the Soviets. Very few major differences with the French on foreign policy issues.

Q: What about dealing with the students? Traditionally one thinks of European students or particularly French students as getting a very solid dose of Marxism and radicalism and all that.

ZIMMERMANN: I think that is still true in French schools more than universities. I think they do get quite a solid dose of that. It doesn't seem to translate itself into an extreme form of politics so much. The French socialist party was a Marxist party when it began. Mitterrand moved it to the right considerably when he took it over, and it split. There was a wing of the party that was more Marxist, that didn't follow along with Mitterrand. They stayed in the party but there was a faction in the party which was set up against Mitterrand. So, I think French politics like the politics in Germany and many other places in Europe moved quite comfortably toward the center. This was to a degree a function of prosperity that was manifest. You do get these two extremes of in France of Le Pen on the right and the communists on the left. These are people that are not participating in the new prosperity as much, and maybe there is not much difference between them. They

seem to appeal to the same kinds of groups. But, I see French politics, certainly this is true in the '70s, I think it is still true, as essentially stable. That the dangers of a student revolution of the sort that we saw in 1968 are not very good. France has become a technological modern industrial country over the last three decades, and I think that has stabilized things quite a lot.

Q: Were there any business disputes between the French and the Americans that spilled into the political field during this time?

ZIMMERMANN: I can't remember any. We were always competing for aircraft sales and things like that in the third world, but I can't remember any big dispute. Certainly the industrial espionage flap with the French came later.

Q: Well then you left there when?

ZIMMERMANN: I left in 1980.

Q: When in 1980?

ZIMMERMANN: It was I think around May. George Vest came through.

Q: He was EUR.

ZIMMERMANN: And he said I have the most wonderful job for you. It is to be a deputy at the CSCE meeting in Madrid that is coming up in the fall of 1980. You'll just love it. I had been studiously avoiding all multilateral diplomacy for as long as I could. I didn't believe George when he said it, but it is very hard to say no to George Vest. He is a very nice man. So, I agreed to do that, and I remember CSCE had fallen on hard times actually because the Afghanistan thing had destroyed most of the contacts with the Soviet Union. Arthur Goldberg had antagonized the Europeans a lot at the Belgrade meeting in 1977. So CSCE was not considered to put it mildly a growth industry, and I remember a farewell dinner that Hartman gave for Teeny and me which in my toast I said, "This may be the only example of a rat boarding a sinking ship." As it turned out it was one of the most fascinating experiences of my life.

Q: And actually CSCE, the sinking ship, really became a major factor in the dissolution of the Soviet Empire.

ZIMMERMANN: It helped a lot. I think it had a very important effect. Although, Jack Matlock didn't write a single word in his book to say that. But, I have talked to Soviets who say that. The president of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Havel, came across the room at a reception in Paris to thank me for what I had done to help rid Czechoslovakia of the Soviets.

Q: Well just the timing, you were doing the CSCE from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I did it twice. I did it from 1980 to 1981, about a year. That was the Madrid conference. You know they have these review conferences. The first was Belgrade, the second was Madrid, the third was Vienna. Then I was head of the American delegation to the Vienna conference. That was '86 to '89.

Q: Well set's stick to the '80-'81 period. What was the genesis of this meeting and what were you doing?

ZIMMERMANN: Okay, well, I don't know how much CSCE you can stand.

Q: I will take as much as we can get because it is a very important thing.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, okay. I am not sure have I done this before. I guess I haven't

Q: This is the first time you have come to this.

ZIMMERMANN: This is the first time I have come to this, okay. Well, the idea of the European security conference was actually a Soviet idea. What they wanted out of it was basically two things. They wanted to bring all the countries of Europe together to discuss security issues, and that would give them a lot of influence over European security policies and would help to undermine NATO. That was one thing they wanted. The other thing they wanted was a document that would ratify the territorial conquests of Eastern Europe, that would ratify the political realities of their control over Eastern Europe. That lived under the euphemism of inviolability of frontiers. That was what they wanted. They wanted those two things primarily. Understandably the United States had no interest in either of these two things, and so successive American administrations beginning with Nixon batted down all of these Soviet overtures. The Europeans were not particularly interested either. First of all the western Europeans said if you are going to have this, you have got to have the United States and Canada in it. The Soviets actually conceded on that, so it became all of the countries of Europe plus North America. We began to shift a little bit in our approach during the last part of the Nixon Kissinger period. Again partly because the Europeans began to see some interest in human rights and human contacts, that maybe this was something the west could use to increase the flow of ideas, information of people back and forth between East and West Europe. Also, the major desire of the Soviets to acquire the inviolability of frontiers, had been overtaken by the various treaties which the Germans signed with Poland, with Czechoslovakia, with East Germany and with the Soviet Union. Nobody was contesting those frontiers anymore. They were essentially recognized. Well, you know, inviolability of frontiers was not going to change anything and was not going to change anybody's policy. The west showed a little bit more interest in this, and they started a negotiation in Helsinki and Geneva to see if they could work out a final document, a document that would embody some of these things. It was a knock down drag out negotiation in which the final trade off was the Soviets got a lot of language about security and detente which was a word they liked, and they got language on inviolability of frontiers. The west got counter language which said the frontiers could be changed by peaceful means, by agreement.

That meant that Germany could be reunified if it could be done peacefully. It meant that the European community could become one state if it wanted to. So, there was a tradeoff there. The west got a lot of language about human contacts, so called basket III, and much more importantly, it got a very strong principle, principle seven of the ten principles of the document, on human rights. The Soviets fought all this very hard, but they obviously thought that this human rights thing would just be one more document that nobody would pay any attention to, so they could give it away finally in the end, which they did. But they miscalculated because they published the entire text of the Helsinki final act in Izvestia, so everybody in the Soviet Union could read it for two kopeks. A lot of people did read it, the wrong people. Because up came all these Helsinki monitoring groups, people like Sakharov got a hold of this and said, you know, if we have been guaranteed this, let's throw this language in their face and insist on it. So, you got all these monitoring groups not only in Russia but in the Ukraine and the Baltic republics. You got Poland, Solidarity picked up on the language and threw it back in the face of the Polish government. You got charter 77 in Czechoslovakia which was a direct spin-off from the Helsinki final document. That Soviet problem was compounded by the agreement that a couple of years after the signing of Helsinki, there would be a so-called review conference which all 35 nations would get together and would review the implementation of the obligations taken in the Helsinki document. So that was held in '77 and '78. Our negotiator was Arthur Goldberg. Goldberg was very rough on the western Europeans. He was rigid and arrogant man, but he pushed the human rights agenda very hard against the Soviets. He pulled some of the Europeans along. So the review meetings began to be associated with a very rigid review of human rights implementation.

Q: Because the border issue was really solved.

ZIMMERMANN: The border issue was solved. The Soviets like to talk about security; and conventional arms control was an element of the Helsinki final act. The Soviets were constantly trying to turn it into a security-only affair with a little bit of economic contact and so forth, but there was enough language in the document to argue for human rights in general, to argue for free emigration, to argue for unjammed radios and free communication. There was just plenty there in this very long document that the west could get a hold of. So the next review meeting was set for 1980 in Madrid. You get the Afghanistan invasion in late 1979 and there was some question whether it should go ahead at all. First of all, Carter asked Governor Scranton of Pennsylvania, former Governor Scranton to lead the American delegation. He decided after hemming and hawing not to do it. Then Carter asked his old friend Griffin Bell to do it. He had been attorney general, was a wonderful man. The number two was to be Max Kampelman, a Washington lawyer with not a lot of diplomatic experience. He had worked for Hubert Humphrey. He had been involved in some middle east negotiation, and he was a brilliant lawyer. Bell came for the first eight weeks and he didn't like it, and he didn't feel comfortable so he quit, and Kampelman became the undisputed head of the delegation which was wonderful for the interests of the United States because he did a superb job. Kampelman came from the democratic right of American politics. He was a very much a hard liner as the Soviets went. He had been a member of the Committee on the Present

Danger, and it was a perfect position for someone who was actually carrying out the only negotiations we were having with the Soviets at the time. We basically stopped talking to them in any other multi lateral forum. Kampelman did it very well. I learned a lot about how to negotiate. First of all you had to decide on the ground rules for the meeting. Of course, we wanted a long period, months for the review of implementation which would give us plenty of time to attack the Soviets and every aspect of human rights violations. They wanted a short time as possible, days for this, and they could filibuster those days so they could avoid it altogether. We ended it up with four or five weeks, enough time to do what we needed to do. NATO worked very closely together including the French. The French were very much cooperative players in this, so there was a very close NATO relationship. The NATO caucus met twice a week typically and sometimes every day and sometimes more than once a day when we were at an urgent or crisis period. And review of implementation was I believe extremely important, though not because anybody in the United States knew what was going on, It was a total yawner for the American press. The European press covered it very carefully. This was just the period when we were getting ready to try to convince the Germans and Italians and British to take intermediate range nuclear weapons on their soil. It was a major issue, a major defense issue.

Q: This is a result of the Soviets bringing in the SS-20 which were intermediate...

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the SS-20 which could hit the center of Europe.

Q: This was supposedly to try to help make Europe more accommodating to the Soviets and this was our counter.

ZIMMERMANN: Our idea for an intermediate force was the counter which would mean you could hit the Soviet Union from Europe. There was nothing on German soil that could go as far as Moscow. This would have been the first time, so it was a major issue. I believe that the black eye that the Soviets were given at Madrid, which was played up a lot in the western European press, helped to condition the western European publics for taking these arms. I am not sure if every day new Soviet violations of human rights were not exposed, if you hadn't had that, I think it is quite possible that you wouldn't have gotten a positive vote in the Bundestag for taking intermediate range missiles. Anyway, it worked like that.

Q: Can we stick to that for just a minute. You say you learned a lot about negotiating from Kampelman. What sort of things?

ZIMMERMANN: I would say primarily first of all he made absolutely sure that he had a base at home, that he had influential people who supported what he was doing, who understood what he was doing and who when he needed them would back him up. Kampelman was a natural politician. He understood the importance of negotiating from the strength of having a base at home that supported you. Secondly, he did the best he could to try to understand what the other side wanted and needed. For somebody who had a very hard line view of the Soviets, that was quite a spectacular approach I thought. He is

a very human person and he could get on a human level with most of the Soviet negotiators, although I will say that some of them were so impassive that nothing could penetrate them. But as he talked to them and listened to them he formed an impression of where their limits were and how far they could go and what they might be able to concede. Third, he always treated them with tremendous dignity. He took them seriously. He never tried to humiliate them. I have seen efforts in the American government to humiliate adversaries. I think they are always counterproductive. Kampelman took it very seriously. He earned a lot of respect from the Soviet negotiators. He still has it. They still call him up when they come to Washington. Finally he was very good at figuring out what you could and what you couldn't do. This was in the waning days of the Carter administration that Kampelman was doing this. He had been appointed by Carter. Then two months after we started in Madrid, Reagan beats Carter in the election. Kampelman is a Democrat he is a conservative Democrat; but he is a Democrat. He doesn't know if he is going to be reappointed here. The first decision facing the Reagan administration in an East-West contest is whether we should support the French proposal for a conference on disarmament in Europe. It means conventional disarmament. This was offered in the CSCE. This was a French and Western European idea in the CSCE to have a conventional arms control negotiation within the CSCE. Very controversial in America. Kampelman decided that in the face of it was not damaging and could be helpful and also provided a good trade off with the human rights side of the CSCE. If you have conventional arms control, nobody could argue that we were getting too over balanced on the human rights side. So he, I think with some courage, persuaded Haig, then Secretary of State in the Reagan White House to accept this. Not easy given the fact that Reagan had come in. There was a great deal of hostility toward even talking to the Soviets. It was the first major decision on an East-West issue that the Reagan administration had to make. They had to make it I think, as early as February having come into power in January. It was a very smart thing.

Q: Did you feel any change in the delegation over this when the Reagan administration came in?

ZIMMERMANN: In our delegation? No, we had a very peculiar delegation because it consisted of some people from the Congress. One of the things that had been created in the Congress to stimulate American human rights policy was a commission of the Congress, joint House-Senate, called the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe or the Helsinki Commission. It was quasi executive as well as legislative. There were three nominal executive branch members including the assistant secretary for human rights in the State department. Because they had a very powerful chairman, Dante Fascell, they insisted they be a part of any American delegations in any CSCE meetings. The structure of our delegation was very peculiar. I think probably unique in the history of American diplomacy. Kampelman was head of delegation. I was one of the vice chairmen, and the other vice chairman was Spencer Oliver who was the staff director of this commission, so he was from the Congress. It was a big staff because there were all kinds of different elements you had to do. You had to do security, you had to do economics, you had to do human rights and so forth. The staff was picked from the State

department and other executive branches including the Defense Department, and from this commission. So we had legislative and executive branch people working along together.

Q: Republican and Democrat.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Fascell was chairman of the commission then and he was a Democrat from Florida. The Democrats were in control of Congress. But the staff of the commission was non partisan. Oliver himself was a Democrat who had actually run for the Democratic nomination for governor of Maryland at one time. But it was a serious problem because Oliver's pugnaciousness and his hostility toward the State Department meant that he considered not only that the commission should have senior positions and staff positions on the delegation, but that it also had a totally free hunting license to criticize from the side of the Congress anything that was going on. So they had two bites at every policy apple. They were part of the staffs and they were involved in all of the discussions. If they didn't like what was being decided they could criticize it from the point of view of the Congress or get one of their Congressmen to do it. It was very difficult. Bell said as he resigned that this was the stupidest thing that had ever been done to put this legislative group in an executive branch position. He was very frustrated by it. But Max Kampelman handled it again very smoothly. I mean he took it as a political reality. He was not going to take on Dante Fascell, a very powerful person. He kept smoothing things over despite the fact that Oliver occasionally attacked him. He attacked him for missing one of the meetings in order to go to a Rosh Hashanah service.

Q: No. Well, how did this Madrid meeting come out?

ZIMMERMANN: I left after a year. It was stymied. There was no meeting of the minds at all on what was to be decided. We were trying to negotiate a document for the Madrid meeting and we just couldn't get anywhere. After a year, Hartman had been assigned, been offered the ambassadorship to Moscow. He asked me to come along as his number two. So I left Madrid after a year. I went back twice during the fall of 1981 because I still retained a position on the delegation. Two things happened that led to this negotiation dragging on for a total of three years. One was the takeover of Poland in December, 1981, by the Polish regime with Soviet support. I recall there was an interesting story. I was supposed to be flying from Moscow to Madrid on a weekend, the weekend of the takeover. I got out to the Moscow airport and we were put on a plane, and there didn't seem to be any pilot. Finally we were taken off the plane and told to go home and come back in the morning. Finally we got off 24 hours late. We found out it turned out later that all of the Soviet pilots from Aeroflot had been commandeered to fly troops and supplies into Warsaw. Anyway, I got to Madrid. It was a couple of days after this enormous event.

Q: Well this was an event that doesn't really raise much, I mean it is not like '68 in Czechoslovakia.

ZIMMERMANN: No, because the Poles did it to themselves. It was done without the use of the Red Army, but it was the end of Polish freedom. It was the end of Solidarity's bid to take over. It was an enormous event, and of course, in the Moscow angle from where we were, it was horrendous. It was going to have a marked effect on our relations with the Russians. I got to Madrid, and people hadn't focused on it yet. I was sure that there were going to be enormous economic sanctions that would come because of this. We just had to react somehow. In Madrid, people were still arguing about commas and exclamation points and semi colons and so forth. I was a bit agitated because I had come from Moscow and had taken awhile to get there, and I said, "You know you are carrying out business as usual, but the other shoe is going to drop. This meeting is not going to be able to continue as usual. Things are going to happen. This has been an enormous even and there is going to be a reaction to it." Well, of course it ended up that the meeting was adjourned. The Madrid meeting was, adjourned for nearly a year as a retaliation to what the Soviets were doing.

Q: Well why don't we stop at this point, and we will pick it up the next time when you are going to Moscow. You went what?

ZIMMERMANN: That was the fall of '81.

Q: Fall of '81 and we will pick it up at that point.

Today is June 9, 1996. Warren we are in the fall of '81 and you are going to Moscow. You served in Moscow this time from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I served from September '81 to July of '84.

Q: What was your job?

ZIMMERMANN: I was the DCM.

Q: How did you get the job?

ZIMMERMANN: I got the job because I had worked for the ambassador, Arthur Hartman, twice before, once in the European bureau and once when he was ambassador to France. He was somebody who had not had a lot of general Soviet experience. He ran the European bureau but he had never served in Moscow before. He didn't speak Russian so he wanted somebody whom he knew and who also had the Moscow credentials, so he fixed on me despite the fact that I had promised my wife that we would never return to Moscow.

Q: Yes. It is the type of job you can't turn down isn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Even she thought that.

Q: Well, what was the situation in '81? This would have been Ronald Reagan had just come in.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, we were probably at the lowest point of our relationship with the Soviet Union in the past two decades since maybe the Cuban missile crisis. Reagan had come in. The Soviets thought he would be another Nixon and be in favor of detente and would be able to deliver the American conservatives toward detente. As it turned out, Reagan had no interest at all in detente. So, the Soviets were not only wrong in their analysis but they were doubly furious at him because he didn't conform to their analysis. So, we got there in the fall of '81 after Moscow had been without an American ambassador for nearly a year with the mission, although it was never clearly expressed, to try to hold things together against the day when the relationship might take a turn for the better.

Q: Well, before you went out there, were you talking to people at the Soviet embassy and getting or from Soviet intellectuals or people that you had contact with, I mean how were you finding that they felt that somehow Reagan was going to be another Nixon?

ZIMMERMANN: Well we heard it. I am not sure we heard it before we got out there, but it became clear to us through our contacts at the USA Institute in Moscow which of course, was a very powerful intellectual organization that our Yuri Arbatov, the head of that institute had advised Brezhnev, who was then still the general secretary and the President, that Reagan would be another Nixon. Arbatov had been proven wrong and was in a very surly mood when we got there because he was out of favor for having miscalculated the American election. So even the contacts which we normally had with the USA institute which usually were more or less good, were circumscribed because of Arbatov's pique at having gotten things wrong.

Q: Could you talk a bit about the role of the USA Institute in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: The USA Institute was 50% a research organization on the United States and 50% a propaganda organization which was designed to be the host of virtually all intellectual American visitors to the Soviet Union and to give them the Soviet line on practically everything. It was heavily infiltrated by KGB as we suspected when we were there, and we later found out to be true, once the Soviet Union collapsed. So it was meant to be the more or less exclusive funnel for American visitors to the Soviet Union. This was in great contrast to Soviet visitors to the United States for whom we had no funnel and they were totally free or nearly totally free to investigate every nook and cranny of American life. We had a filter in Moscow in the USA Institute. American professors visiting and others visiting had to use that filter.

Q: What was the political situation in the Soviet Union like when you arrived in '81?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, it was now called the period of stagnation. Brezhnev was in his dotage. He was slurring words; he was falling asleep. He was getting drunk. There was a general perception that nothing was happening. In fact, Brezhnev died shortly after we got there and was succeeded by Andropov who didn't last very long either, who was succeeded by Chernenko who also didn't last very long. So it was a period, it was probably the period in which the seeds for the destruction of the Soviet Union were coming to bloom. When Gorbachev, who was a dynamic energetic individual took over after I had left, Hartman was still there, he was taking over on the ashes of an absolutely paralyzed ineffective political apparatus.

Q: Well, lets talk about the embassy first. How did Arthur Hartman work in Moscow?

ZIMMERMANN: Hartman was and is a genuine intellectual, somebody who approaches problems with a very clear insight into them. He was extremely frustrated by the inability to get to see Soviet officials at a high level and on a regular basis. He turned in a direction which no previous American ambassador had ever turned which was toward the dissident and refusnik community. He decided if he wasn't able to get to official Soviets he was prepared to talk to unofficial ones. He became a great leader in the cultivation and the support for the dissident community in the Soviet Union including many people who are now holding important posts today.

Q: Did this sort of upset you might say the embassy establishment in this. I mean this is a turnaround and sometimes there is the feeling would we do that, don't rock the boat or something like that?

ZIMMERMANN: No, the people in the embassy loved it because first of all some of them were assigned to look after the dissidents, and secondly, they felt as he did that these were people that it was the duty of the United States to support. I think most people in the embassy thought it had not been done adequately before Hartman arrived.

Q: Well, when you say dissidents, often this was focused on the Jewish community but this was a far broader group.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. There were essentially two types of people who were on the outs with the regime whom the U.S. embassy could see. One group were dissidents, that is people who were focusing their lives and their careers on opposing one way or another the policies and the structure of the communist Soviet Union. Those were people like Alexander Solzhenitsyn who by then was in the United States, Andrei Sakharov, people most of whom had no intention of leaving the Soviet Union. They were reformers. They were interested in improving. Then you had a second group. The first group was not primarily Jewish. They were primarily Russian or primarily Ukrainian or Baltic, where ever they came from, although there were many important Jews among them including Sakharov's wife. But secondly there was the group of refuseniks. These were almost entirely Jewish. These were people who wanted to leave the Soviet Union, go to Israel or

the United States who felt that they had been subjected to tremendous ethnic discrimination which was the case. They felt no particular allegiance to the country or to the regime or to the doctrine of communism. They simply wanted to get out. Perversely, although they were a thorn in the side of the Soviet authorities, the authorities decided to prevent them from leaving. We saw both of these groups, and they had not been seen at the ambassadorial level before at any point during the whole history of the cold war.

Q: Well on this new focus, there is always almost this competition between one trying to influence people, you know, and present the American point of view with the hope that eventually they will be in positions to do something, and the other one is sort of from the intelligence side to milk them of everything they know. Was that a problem because the intelligence side can taint the other relationship? Did that come up?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the Soviets, of course, had a traditional paranoia about the United States and, they certainly felt that our desire for contact with them was driven by the desire to find out illicit information about them. That's why they went to such ludicrous extremes to prevent us from meeting with Soviet officials, with Soviet citizens, with scientists and so forth. Certainly there was a desire on our part to learn as much as we could about the Soviet Union, particularly those things which pertained to American interests. But there was also a desire to find people we could communicate with in order to have a dialogue and project the American point of view and get an authoritative version, not just out of Pravda, of the Soviet point of view. In those three years '81-'84 when I was there, that was denied us.

Q: Well, Well the KGB, at this point Andropov was running the country to begin with, wasn't he still running the KGB?

ZIMMERMANN: He was running the KGB. Of course, we knew that every phone conversation we had that every conversation we had within our own apartments or residences was bugged and listened to. I heard estimated by a person in the CIA when I was a very junior officer in Moscow, when I was a first secretary in the '70s, that no fewer than six KGB people were assigned exclusively to me to collect telephone transcripts and buggings from the apartment and to follow me where I went and so forth. Six were dedicated to me. In an embassy which probably had 40 or 50 officers that is already an enormous expenditure of resources. They would have to do the same to the British and the French and the Germans and some of the other embassies in town. So this was a police state in an absolutely accurate sense of the word. The promotion career possibilities for people in the KGB were better than for people in the foreign ministry for example or people in the other civilian ministries. The KGB was more or less the top of the tree for ambitious careerists in Russia. It dominated everything.

Q: Was there any feeling that in the long run the KGB might be almost the answer? They were really much more exposed to the real world than other parts of the Soviet Union.

ZIMMERMANN: We were anxious to get to know KGB people, people that we knew or suspected were KGB. KGB people were more interesting to us because we assumed they would be better informed, would be closer to what the really authoritative elements of the regime were. So, we rather than shun them, we were very anxious to talk to them.

Q: I mean again we come to these two sides. One, to try to turn a KGB agent of course is the goal of any decent CIA man, as the reverse is true. But there was more than that. This is to, not to influence them but to reform them and get from them. Did you find them a good source?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Any diplomat wants to talk to people in the host government who are important and authoritative. In the Soviet Union that meant in most cases the KGB, so we were very interested when we knew or suspected that somebody was a KGB person to give them our position and to listen carefully for theirs.

Q: What about daily life there? Was it a problem; had it gotten worse, better?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, there was very little difference between our first tour and our second tour six years later. Everything in daily life was a hassle. I am speaking about diplomats now. For Soviet citizens it was a hassle times ten. Shopping was difficult. Getting anything repaired was difficult. Finding people to talk to was difficult. It was a very stressful life for diplomats. There were very few occasions where you could totally relax because you were constantly under the surveillance of the KGB who would exploit any weakness, drunkenness, sexual aberration, affairs, that kind of thing. They would try to use those against anybody they caught doing it.

Q: How did Arthur Hartman relate to his staff?

ZIMMERMANN: Hartman, I would not call him a chummy person. He had a certain aloofness and dignity. He also presided over an embassy which consistently I think got the highest marks by the inspectors for morale. He was very sympathetic to individual problems. As I said, this turn toward human rights made him very popular with his staff. I recall as a matter of fact, that the first lunch he had at Spaso House, the ambassador's residence, was for the spouses, the Soviet spouses of American citizens who were unable to leave the country. The spouses couldn't leave the country, so we had our own group of refuseniks. There were about 30 of them. Most of them were Jewish but not all. Nobody had thought to bring them together as a group, and Hartman did that. He brought them together as a group, we had lunch. He expressed his strong support for getting them exit visas so they could join their husbands in the United States. It was a wonderful gesture which had never been done before and which I think immediately ingratiated him to his staff because many of the staff in the embassy had been taking care of these people. They had been having them around and cheering them up and so forth. There were some people in the embassy who felt that since Hartman was not a traditional Soviet type, that is he had not done his apprenticeship in previous tours in the Soviet Union. He did not know Russian. That he was inappropriate for the job. I detected some feeling to that extent. I

disputed it. I was opposed to it, but I think it did exist. I would say by and large, when he was an ambassador, he was very much admired for his diplomatic ability. To my mind he was one of the best two or three diplomats I have ever seen, not just worked with, but seen in my career. He was greatly admired for that. He was greatly admired for his integrity which was rock bottom 100%. I think essentially he had a very positive, gave a very positive feeling to people who were in the embassy.

Q: Well his not being a Soviet Russian expert, I would think that would cast you in a somewhat different role than the normal DCM who was supposed to be the inside man who administers the embassy. Did you find you were called on more somewhat different than the traditional DCM role?

ZIMMERMANN: Well I think I in a way had to be in the traditional DCM role in the sense that DCMs look after the running of the embassy, are the lightning rod for morale problems and so forth. I did that. I had never really done that before. I discovered I liked doing that quite a lot because it brought me very closely in touch with varieties of people. But, Hartman did look to me for that, and I worked very hard at that part of it. That was certainly well over 50% of what I did, although previous to that I had been primarily a substantive political officer.

Q: Well, looking at both the political and even more so the economic officer's part of this, what sort of information were they getting? I mean was it still the traditional looking up at the newspapers and newscasts and that sort of thing?

ZIMMERMANN: You got very little from people. You got most of it from published sources. I think certainly that was true with the economic section. They had to rely on mostly what was published, and what they could see with their own eyes.

Q: Well this is it. This, of course, came up about a decade later with the essential collapse of the Soviet Union mainly because of economic inefficiency and political stagnation. Were we looking at the Soviets and saying you know, Gee this doesn't work, or was it just more of the same the way we were seeing it? Or were we seeing any increase in the non workingness of the whole system?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think there was a general feeling that it was grinding down. Brezhnev had become a figure of ridicule while we were there.

Q: Ridicule in the embassy or ridicule in society?

ZIMMERMANN: Ridicule in society. Now when Andropov took over, strangely enough, he was seen as a kind of a reformer. Somebody who was going to get the system moving again. Of course, he didn't have much time to do it, and the things he did were not very radical, so nobody will ever know whether he would've moved things or not. But, even Soviet dissidents and people who were on the leading edge of independent culture were quite sympathetic to Andropov, at least in comparison to Brezhnev. I remember for

example, Yuri Lubimov who was the head of the Taganka Theater which was the most avant garde Russian theater. It did some productions which were very critical, inferentially critical of the regime. But Lubimov was an admirer Andropov. Andropov had sent his son to try out for Lubimov's theater, and Lubimov tried him out and turned him down, and he went back to his apartment and waited for the inevitable phone call that would tell him he was fired. He got the phone call. It came from Andropov himself and it consisted of two words, "Thank you." So Lubimov who was a very influential person in the dissident community was propagating Andropov. Roy Medvedev, who was a dissident historian, was strongly supporting Andropov, so Andropov had a mixed reputation. Some of the dissidents supported him; others felt that this was just a somewhat more palatable version of a totally corrupt and ineffective and oppressive regime. Then when Andropov died and Chernenko took over, that was a step backwards because Chernenko was a Brezhnev person and was very old and infirm.

Q: What was the general feeling about this Chernenko taking over from Andropov? I mean what was our analysis?

ZIMMERMANN: Well the analysis was simple and I think even obvious that the politburo was not up to pushing reform further than Andropov was prepared to take it, and instead took a step backwards from reform by choosing someone who wasn't even politically important. He had been an apparatchik, a bureaucrat all his life, and had been associated with Brezhnev, the model of stagnation. So, it was a clear indication that this politburo was not up to reform. Actually when they chose Gorbachev not so long afterwards, it is doubtful that very many of them realized that Gorbachev would become the reformer that he turned out to be. He certainly was more energetic than the others and younger, but he had been an orthodox communist up to that point, and nobody had guessed that, neither in the west nor in the Soviet Union he was going to turn out the way he did.

Q: Did you feel that you were as sometimes embassies do having to fight fires on both your rear and your front? In other words you were dealing with the Soviets who were difficult, and then you had the new Reagan administration. The Reagan administration changed over the years as most do, became more subtle in how it approached problems, but you had the brand new Reagan administration, the NSC, the White House particularly. Did you feel they were unhelpful, or was it a problem?

ZIMMERMANN: Well the NSC was absolutely terrible in the sense that it took a bad relationship between the U.S. and Soviet Union, two countries which after all were capable of destroying each other, took this bad relationship and made it worse on purpose. Richard Pipes for example, who was the Soviet expert, a fine historian of Russian history from Harvard, he would take drafts of letters from Reagan to Brezhnev and sharpen them so as to put in insults, the kind of language that the Soviets would immediately take to be insulting. Something that no head of state should ever do. Of course that would infuriate the Soviets and we would end up with a kind of a non existent relationship. The State Department was not like that. You had people in the State

Department who were pragmatists. Larry Eagleburger who at that point was undersecretary for political affairs, and was Hartman's major interlocutor, understood the need to keep a relationship going, and most of all George Shultz. When he became Secretary of State, he had a clear view that we had to maintain a relationship with the Soviet Union. He worked very hard on Reagan using whatever tools he had to move Reagan toward a more cooperative relationship with Moscow. Shultz worked with Mike Deaver who was a public relations guy but was very close to Mrs. Reagan who had doubts about the tough policy because she did not want her husband to go down in history as the man who messed up relations with the Soviet Union. So, she was a factor for a better relationship. Deaver fed that, and Shultz in the State Department was working in that direction. Finally, we got by 1983 to a situation where we were able to make a number of small agreements with the Soviets. They didn't amount to much individually. Collectively they didn't amount to much either but at least there were elements of cooperation that were going on. Things were beginning to pick up. Then you got the Soviet shooting down of the Korean airliner sometime in the spring or summer of 1983, and that knocked everything back.

Q: Before that you were talking about Richard Pipes, sharpening and exacerbating the situation. What was his motivation in doing that?

ZIMMERMANN: He was anti Soviet. He is a Polish émigré. He had a traditional Polish view of the Soviet Union which was 100% negative, and he did not want a close relationship with the Soviet Union. It is actually amazing to me as a professional diplomat that people should not want even a minimal relationship with a country that was as powerful as the Soviet Union. But Pipes didn't want it. Richard Perle who was a very important force in the Pentagon didn't want it. His boss, Secretary of Defense Weinberger didn't want it. These were people who were so ideologically hard over against any relationship with the Soviets that it became very hard for Reagan who may have been ideologically in the same camp, but personally wanted a relationship. He wanted to get to know Soviet leaders. He thought he could influence them. It made it very hard for him. So during most of his first term nothing happened that was cooperative.

Q: Also there was a period of what I gather was a sort of a freewheeling national security council who didn't really have any leadership in the National Security Advisor. You had some rather weak people who didn't know the territory.

ZIMMERMANN: You had weak people and it was a kind of a revolving door. They changed all the time, and there was no discipline anyway in the White House.

Q: It allowed sort of the people who had their own agenda, the Pipes and later Ollie North and all to sort of go ahead and do their thing.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. There was nobody telling them to stop.

Q: I have been interviewing Frank Carlucci talking about when he was eventually called in just to clean up the mess. He fired a lot of people and just sort of got the thing organized because it was sort of all these independent operators. Were you feeling that?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh yes, sure. Definitely on Soviet policy. People would come in with their own agendas. There was no sense that they had to discipline themselves, that they had to stick to any policy line at all other than what they decided in their wisdom was the right one.

Q: How about high level visits; were there many?

ZIMMERMANN: There were none at all. Reagan didn't meet Gorbachev until 1985, so we had no major visits I can remember at all. In fact, Gromyko who had the habit of going to the UN every fall for the opening of the UN general assembly and would usually go down to Washington and meet the President, we sanctioned his plane. We tried to prevent his plane landing at Kennedy Airport which of course was ludicrously ineffective and stupid. As I recall the ruckus over that effort resulted in no Gromyko meeting with high level American people.

Q: Sanctioning it, here somebody is coming to the UN. I mean what the hell was this all about?

ZIMMERMANN: It had to do with some effort by New York State I think it was or the governor whoever it was at that time, to grandstand and to make a stand against Gromyko. Of course Gromyko had a perfect right of going to the UN to land. We have a treaty obligation to provide that, but that didn't stand in the way of people. He eventually did land, but he was furious that it just made the atmosphere for any serious discussion with him impossible.

Q: How about Congress? Was there much Congressional to and fro?

ZIMMERMANN: Congress was very interested in the human rights side of things, of course. I don't think Congress was a major factor in trying to hold back the relationship in the first Reagan term. We got a number of Congressional visitors who were anxious to meet at the highest level possible with Soviet officials. In a way, I think Congress may have had a moderating effect on the extremes of the Reagan administration's anti Sovietism at the beginning.

Q: What was the feeling your feeling and maybe by inference by Hartman and all about Reagan during this time? Was he considered such a right winger, you know sort of a we just have to get through this administration or was he seen as maybe something could be done?

ZIMMERMANN: I can only speak for myself on this. I am not sure what Hartman would say. I voted against Reagan twice. I am a Democrat. I didn't like what he stood for at all. I

didn't have much respect for his competence before he was President. When he came into office, I was faced with the normal choice of every foreign service officer is faced with, do you want to serve this president or not. If you serve him, you are loyal to him and you carry out instructions. I grew to think quite quickly that Reagan because of his strong belief in personal relationships actually wanted to have a better relationship with the Russians. He wrote Brezhnev hand written letters occasionally talking about peace, and getting rid of nuclear weapons. So this was a man that I thought would come around if you could somehow reduce the influence of these baleful advisors that he had who didn't want any progress at all.

Q: What about Afghanistan during this time? You arrived sort of two years into the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. At that point I guess it looked like the Soviets were really going to subdue Afghanistan didn't it? What was the feeling?

ZIMMERMANN: The feeling I think by 1981 was that the Soviets were in a quagmire. They didn't seem to be able to deal with anything. We began to get probes. I don't know if it was disinformation or real information, but they were looking for a way to get out. They wanted the United States to help them. Of course, the price of that might have been pretty high I guess. Even as I recall Dobrynin said something.

Q: Was he ambassador?

ZIMMERMANN: He was ambassador to Washington. As I recall he said something to somebody in the State Department about the need to get U.S. help to help the Soviets out of Afghanistan. The rumor when Andropov came in was that he was going to get them out of Afghanistan. That was a rumor that was so widespread it almost certainly was being spread by the KGB. Of course he didn't do it. He didn't do it in the year or so before he died.

Q: Was the embassy sort of saying here is a target of opportunity? Let's make it more difficult for them. How did we feel about that?

ZIMMERMANN: I wouldn't say the embassy was involved in that. There was a strong Congressional view which resulted in legislation to arm the mujahideen in Afghanistan, which I have to say I was not sympathetic with but which actually turned out to work to make it more difficult for the Soviets. Indeed that is what happened. There is no doubt at all I think that American arms help and training for the mujahideen helped them to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan. Now of course, we have a mujahideen problem.

Q: What about Soviets in this period internationally? Were they messing around? How did we feel about what they were doing in let's say Central America?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the relationship with Cuba was as strong as ever. We were on a crusade, of course, in Nicaragua and El Salvador and were alleging a lot of Soviet and Cuban communist influence there. I think that was a big exaggeration. A lot of the

dissidence there it seems to me was indigenous. But we had major disputes with the Soviets over Nicaragua for example when we mined the harbors of Nicaragua; they were furious at that, of course. I don't think Central America was a major issue for them. It was for us, and we imputed to them a lot of things I think they weren't actually doing. As far as Asia was concerned, trying to think back, I don't think we had any serious problems with them then. The North Vietnamese who had taken over in '75 had not really extended their influence very far, so there was not a feeling that the Soviets were piggybacking with the North Vietnamese into new areas of influence in Asia. Africa was such a mixed picture. I didn't feel that we had serious problems there. The middle east was a major area of confrontation, as it traditionally had been and it remained. Europe was very important because we were trying to put in intermediate range weapons. As far as the Soviets were concerned the major question was would the Germans be prepared to accept these missiles that could reach into the Soviet Union.

Q: Well, the Soviets had already introduced their intermediate one the SS-20.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the Pershings and the cruise missiles, the INF weapons so to speak were designed to be a counter to the SS-20s. If you look at it, and we get into strategic arms theory here, but if you look at it from the point of view of the doctrine of deterrence, we wouldn't have needed to put intermediate range weapons in Europe because we had the triad of American strategic weapons in the air, ground based missiles, and submarine based missiles. If the Soviets attacked with their SS-20s we could destroy the Soviet Union with these strategic weapons. But there was a strong feeling that you needed to balance the SS-20 off with an intermediate range weapon that would be stationed in western Europe. For example, this would be the first nuclear weapon stationed in Germany ever.

Q: Well they have had, I remember as a GI, I could see this cannon being rolled around Frankfort and other places, huge atomic cannon.

ZIMMERMANN: I may be wrong in this; they may have had tactical nuclear weapons, but these were the first nuclear weapons the Germans had that could reach the Soviet Union. The Soviets mounted a major campaign to stop that.

Q: Well, if I recall, that the Soviets had put in the SS-20s mainly to tell Europe say look the United States might not support you if we just have these, and therefore you are under our gun. I mean ours was a response in a way wasn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Ours was a response to the SS-20, there is no doubt about it. The SS-20 was certainly a weapon that intimidated and was meant to intimidate western Europe. So the issue boiled down to Germany and who would have the greater influence on the Germans. The Russians waged an all out no holds barred campaign of threat, intimidation, inducement, bribe, whatever to insure that the Bundestag did not vote to accept the weapons, and they lost. I think it was in the fall of 1983 that the Bundestag voted to accept the Pershing missiles. I happened to be in Berlin. I had gone from Moscow to a conference at the Aspen Institute in Berlin, and it was the day after the vote.

One of the members of the German Bundestag who was at the conference from the social democratic party which was the party in power, Schmidt's party, said, "This is the blackest day for Germany since the war." I said, "Coming from Moscow, this is the blackest day for the Soviet Union since the Cuban missile crisis." Indeed the Russians had lost big, really big.

Q: Was that manifested from Moscow, I mean from your point of observation?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh sure, absolutely. This was their major foreign policy objective, and it failed.

Q: This is right from the institution of the SS-20. It was a whole follow through we will, this will help separate Europe from NATO in a way.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. It was very definitely a political agenda as well as a military agenda there. The reaction to it, the fact that the Germans and the Italians accepted nuclear weapons on their soil brought them even closer to NATO, made them much more an integral part of NATO's overall defense, so it was a real defeat for the Russians.

Q: How was this played publicly in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: I can't remember exactly, but of course in their press they never lose a battle. I think it was played as perfidious American forces working on German opinion, that the Germans took a decision which was against their basic interests under the influence of American pressure and American power and so forth.

Q: Was there any feeling, you know, during the Kissinger years at least in some of my interviews, I have had the feeling that Kissinger was basically pessimistic about the ability of the United States to stick to it, that the Soviet Union was here to stay, and that it was best to cut a deal earlier rather than later with the Soviets because in a way, time was on the Soviet's side. This may be unfair, but I had this feeling. I was wondering what the feeling was during this time. Was the feeling that time was on our side or on the Soviet side or what?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, my feeling and I suppose it was fairly typical in the embassy was that we were stronger than the Soviets in every countable way. We were stronger militarily. We were stronger politically. We were stronger in the allegiance of our people. We were stronger in our ability to win genuine support as opposed to coerced support from other countries. But I also believed as I think everybody in the embassy believed, that the Soviet Union was going to be around for a long time and was going to be our adversary for a long time. I cannot pretend that I sat at the U.S. embassy in 1983 and 1984 and predicted that in six years the Soviet Union would be gone. I didn't think that. I don't know anybody who thought it.

Q: If they did they certainly kept their thoughts hidden. What about the ethnic problems? Were we watching that? I am talking about the various ethnic, the Ukrainians the Kazakhs and all. Were we watching that?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, we had people in the embassy who were assigned to different areas and who would travel as often as they could to those areas. I think there was no misunderstanding of the ethnic tensions that were a part of Soviet rule.

Q: But did we feel that they were pretty well sat upon and kept from...

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I think everybody in the embassy exaggerated the ability of the repressive elements in the Soviet regime to keep things under their thumb. I can remember saying, and I wish I had followed this to its logical conclusion, I can remember saying, "The Soviet Union is a stable country, but it has the stability of a catamaran to use a sailing term, the multi hulled sailboat rather than a single hulled sailboat. A single hulled sailboat can keel way over but it will come back up. A multi hulled sailboat won't keel over, but if a big wind hits it, and it goes way over, it will go all the way over. And the only things that could drive the Soviet Union over, I thought to myself, were a combination of major economic crisis and ethnic unrest." That of course, is what happened, but I was assigning a very low probability to both of those contingencies, when in fact there was a high probability to both of them.

Q: Well, I think this is one of the things that really everyone missed, both in the Soviet Union and the west was how poorly the system, everybody knew the system was working poorly, but you know there was the feeling yes it is but it will always stay the way it is.

ZIMMERMANN: Well I think that is right. It had been around so long working poorly that I think most people assumed it would be around for a long time working poorly.

Q: Were you there when announced the Star Wars Initiative?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes.

Q: You might explain what that was and sort of the reaction both within the embassy and what you were getting from the Soviets.

ZIMMERMANN: Without any staffing out or briefing papers or consultation, at the end of his speech Reagan announced...

Q: I think it was a state of the union speech.

ZIMMERMANN: Maybe it was that, announced that he was prepared to build a space based defense, that is a defense that could strike and destroy incoming Soviet missiles in space. The Soviets didn't waste a nanosecond in deciding that this was a very dangerous idea. They worked very hard propagandistically to denounce it, to try to show that it would exacerbate tensions, that it could lead to world war III, that it would be too

expensive, that they could match it, which of course they couldn't and didn't, and it would drive the arms race into unparalleled heights. They were genuinely scared of it, because they knew they couldn't duplicate it. They assumed funnily enough that we could build it. As it turned out, we faked our tests, and they believed it. I later negotiated on this. I didn't know we were faking tests, and the Soviets didn't know we were faking tests. They assumed because they had this rather pathetic admiration for American science, that we could do anything we wanted to do, and they couldn't. So they saw this as giving us what they called the first strike capability. If you want to get into the strategic aspects of it, I can do that, but essentially they saw it as unilaterally putting us way ahead and putting us in a position where we could destroy their country without them being able to destroy ours. This was another objection which was a genuine objection, they considered it violated the ABM Treaty which had been signed in 1972. Indeed most objective American observers agreed with them on that.

Q: What did this cause, did the embassy get involved in this or was this something that was worked out, I mean was there higher levels to deal with the Soviets?

ZIMMERMANN: Nobody talked to the Soviets before Reagan's speech, and I think very few people talked to the Soviets after it. I certainly don't recall that the embassy weighed in against the initiative. After all, it was announced by the President. It was American policy, so we thought that our job was to report what the Soviets were saying about it. It took a long time for it to have any concrete nature in American implementation. It was an idea that took a long time to be brought to any kind of production phase, even research and development phase.

Q: I recall President even said something about and we will share this with the Soviets or something like that.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, he did say that. Of course they didn't believe him.

It is unbelievable to me that we would share with them technology which we had which was much better than their technology. Whether Reagan wanted to or not I just don't believe it. And the Soviets certainly didn't believe it.

Q: I think it was Ronald Reagan sitting practically alone in his room coming up with this and would pass it on to other sort of the American military and scientific establishment in a scramble to figure out what the hell this was and how to do it. in a way wasn't it.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, everybody was caught by surprise except I guess, Dr. Teller, who apparently was the one who convinced the President to do it.

Q: That was Edward Teller.

ZIMMERMANN: He was the one I gather who faked the tests.

Q: Speaking of technology, did you see, you I am speaking about our collective Soviet experts, see the advent of the computer technology which was coming in? We are talking about personal computers and general communications and all of being something that the Soviets couldn't, I mean the system wouldn't allow it to get out in their own hands, that was a real threat.

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely. I mean they were paranoid about Xerox machines or the Soviet equivalent of Xerox machines. If you were working in a Soviet institution, you had to go through the ordeals of Hercules in order to get to use a duplicating machine because they were so afraid of the power of the duplicating machine to disseminate information that they didn't want spread around. Samizdat got stuff typed on carbon, one carbon after another because these poor guys who were doing it couldn't get access to duplicating machines, but the cybernetics revolution was a major threat, was an enormous threat to the Soviet Union because the Soviet Union operated on total control of information. If they couldn't control information, then they couldn't proselytize and control their people the way they wanted to. So, there is no doubt at all that they saw it as a major threat.

Q: Well, but also at the same time, if you wanted to be a modern nation you had to have these things and throw them into the masses so they could all produce.

ZIMMERMANN: You had to have them, you particularly had to have them for your defense industry because it couldn't possibly compete with us if it didn't get into the computer age. So, they were faced with this problem, a delicious one from our point of view because it challenged the very essence of Soviet dictatorship.

Q: Were we kind of putting these things together at the time.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, that was an obvious one because it was so clear to anybody who had anything to do with the Soviets that control of information was a paramount objective of theirs.

Q: Were there any efforts made on the part of Soviet scientific community to say come on fellows, let's swallow this pill if we want to be part of the modern world?

ZIMMERMANN: I think that the work remains to be written about the role of the Soviet scientific community in the modernization of Russia. We assumed that the Soviet scientists were among the leading liberals, the leading would-be reformers in the Soviet apparatus. Occasionally one or two of them would pop up to give evidence along those lines. Like Sakharov who was a significant nuclear physicist, and there must have been others like him who weren't quite as brave maybe who were trying behind the scenes to move things. Sagdayev who is now married to Susan Eisenhower and was the head of their defense program was a person like that, a man of extraordinary integrity. So we assumed the scientists were among the leading wedges of reform in the Soviet Union. That is exactly why the Soviet Academy of Sciences and its political apparatus made sure that the scientific community was totally under the thumb of the party. The way that the

Academy of Sciences worked was that you had party people, reliable party people at the top who could not only prevent the outbreak of dissidence or quell it if it happened, but could also restrict the contacts that Soviet scientists had with scientists from other parts of the world. Of course, a soviet scientist would not get travel permission unless he was certified to be politically correct. The dissidents would rarely be able to travel. Sakharov for example, never got to the west as far as I know except maybe once for humanitarian reasons to see a family member.

Q: I mean this was just one more of those factors that was thrown in of how the Soviet system is crippling itself because for science you have got to have these contacts..

ZIMMERMANN: Of course you do. I remember talking to the scientists at Livermore and Los Alamos. I asked the heads of those labs about Soviet military science. They said, "Theoretically it is the best in the world, but they can't implement it." That was an interesting comment. They can't actually produce the stuff.

Q: Did you have a science attaché?

ZIMMERMANN: We did; we took that very seriously. He was in fact not a scientist, but he was somebody who had an enormously probing intellect and was very much involved in the importance of science in politics which was really what that job entailed.

Q: What was the role of Dobrynin who had been for so many years the Soviet ambassador in the United States? I mean in the old days he and Kissinger bypassed everybody it seemed. Was he a spent factor by this time?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I don't think he was a spent factor, but I think he was a very negative one. In the embassy we did not share the view that Dobrynin was the liberal or in the reforming wing of the Soviet communist party, that he was a reliable interlocutor. Our sense of Dobrynin was that he was an opportunist, he would tell his bosses what they wanted to hear. He would make things up occasionally to put himself in a better light. WE had one piece of actual evidence of this because Hartman had a meeting with Gromyko, and the meeting had to do with a subject, I don't remember what it was, on which there had been a meeting in Washington the day before between Gromyko and Secretary Shultz. Between Dobrynin and Secretary Shultz. We had our reporting cable, almost a verbatim cable from that meeting, and Gromyko had his. There was nothing in common with the cables. It was clear that Dobrynin who rarely took a note taker anyway into meetings just distorted what had gone on, where we had a pretty near verbatim account. I don't know whether Gromyko felt that this was helpful to him or not.

Q: It's scary really.

ZIMMERMANN: It's scary. There was one other example from Dobrynin which comes from 1985. This was a meeting which I did not attend but it was during the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Geneva. Hartman was there and told me the story that Gorbachev led off with a totally erroneous misperceived view of the United States, that it was run by

the Jews and the industrial capitalists and so forth. He turned to Dobrynin and Dobrynin reinforced that view. Dobrynin had lived in the United States for nearly two decades, for over a decade, over two decades, and knew the United States very well. He knew that was wrong, but he was not prepared to move Gorbachev away from this very erroneous view, even gently. In fact, he reinforced it; he stoked it. Now I will say I have read Dobrynin's memoirs carefully. I use them in my teaching. I think it is a very important book. It rings true mostly in the various things he describes, so the reflective Dobrynin is maybe a bit better than the operational Dobrynin, but the operational Dobrynin had no fans in the American embassy. There is another thing I should say out of fairness. We resented the fact that Dobrynin had terrific access in Washington whereas our Ambassador had very little access in Moscow.

Q: But just emphasizing, could you point out why it could be considered just plain dangerous to have an ambassador who is not reporting accurately.

ZIMMERMANN: I am not sure it is always dangerous, but if he gives a distorted view of the position of an American administration, it makes it much harder for a Soviet government to formulate a policy that deals with those positions. When we set out a position whether publicly or in confidence to the Soviets, we want them to understand it. We don't want them to carry away a different view of what we are trying to say than what we are trying to give them. I think Dobrynin at least in some cases, did that.

Q: Were there the problems of the security of the embassy while you were there or not?

ZIMMERMANN: They happened shortly after. I am trying to think. I can say this. The problems happened after, the Lonetree and Bracy incidents happened after I left.

Q: Could you explain what they were.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Lonetree and Bracy were marine guards of the American embassy, and they were arrested by the U.S. government and accused of spying for the Soviets, of letting Soviet people into the embassy. The charge against Bracy was dropped. Lonetree was convicted and sentenced to 30 years. This came at a time when Hartman was ambassador, and Hartman was heavily criticized in the United States on television for being lax on security. That is an issue I would like to address because I can address that from my own experience in the embassy in Moscow. Hartman believed that if you can't communicate with the Soviets personally, there is still a way you can communicate with them. You can talk to the bugs. He would have, for example, visitors from the United States, Congressmen, businessmen, professors, policy people, etc. He would sit them down in his residence at Spaso House and speak totally frankly and openly about American policy toward the Soviet Union. He had in mind two audiences: his guests and the people on the other end of the listening devices because he wanted the message to get through. If he couldn't get to see people, then he would do it this way. He used to say quite openly, this is what I am doing. I believe in this. Now, some of the right wing conservatives in Washington began to spread it around that Hartman was lax on security

because he was saying things to listening devices that were sensitive. Hartman knew exactly what he was doing. It was exactly the right thing, I believe.

Q: This is part of getting to the intelligence apparatus that was such a major factor, because these would be read at the very top level.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, exactly. Andropov would have probably seen them or his successor. So, that was number one. Number two was that the security people in Washington decided that the new embassy which was going up already in Moscow could be made absolutely bug proof. They had never made a totally bug proof embassy anywhere in the world, so they were going to choose the toughest city in the world to do it in. They came up with a project which would have produced an embassy with no windows because windows are easier than stone walls to transmit radio signals. With no windows, and artificial light, therefore everywhere in the embassy, so the little amount of sun you get in Moscow with its long winters would be reduced to zero in the working environment. It was going to be highly complex because a lot of the intricate equipment was going to be ensconced in ceilings and behind walls and so forth where it would be very difficult to get at to service and to monitor and to check. Hartman felt it was a Rube Goldberg scheme, and he also felt it would diminish security because you would create such a morale problem which was bad enough in Moscow already for people working in this cave. They would seek relief by drinking, by having affairs, by all the kinds of human foibles that can happen to you when you are depressed. They would make themselves vulnerable to a KGB probe, and then you would have an American sitting in the embassy who would be passing out secrets, and your perfect security wouldn't work. So, Hartman strongly opposed this on security grounds. To my mind he was absolutely right, but he infuriated the security community in Washington by opposing their pet project. He said, I remember one of his grace notes was, "Look, if you are going to try to have a perfect security embassy, try it somewhere where our security is not so important. Don't try it in the most difficult country of all with the most sophisticated penetration devices. Try it somewhere else." So that was the second thing. The third thing was that we had Russian employees in the embassy. We assumed that every single one of them without exception reported to the KGB or was in fact a full time KGB officer. This was understood, and of course there were parts of the embassy they couldn't go into. There was a strong move in Congress to get rid of the Russian employees and have American employees come to Moscow and do all the menial stuff that the Russians did, the char force stuff and drivers and things like that. Hartman opposed this again on security grounds. He said, "Look, we know the Russian employees are KGB people. We don't let them into parts of the embassy which are sensitive. Our people are all trained not to spill sensitive information in front of them. What if you get Americans? They will come and do menial tasks; they will have a low level of education. They won't speak Russian. They won't be trained for service in a foreign hostile difficult country like the Soviet Union. They will be sitting ducks for the KGB."

Q: Oh absolutely.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, you know, they didn't like that. I should say one other thing to go back to the so called fully secure building. Hartman said, "Look, there is a simple way to provide security within the embassy building without getting rid of the windows. It has been existing for 30 years. It has only been penetrated once in Harry Barnes' shoe. It is the secure rooms." He said, "If you make absolutely sure when there are meetings going on in those rooms that you are monitoring them in real time, you can't miss," which is true. The problems of the bubbles historically as I understand it is they are not always being monitored when the meetings are taking place, so you can't be sure stuff is coming in or out. But if you monitor them as you could do in Moscow, you can be absolutely sure.

Q: We are talking about a plastic room inside a room and the monitoring being...

ZIMMERMANN: To see if any radio signals are going in or out, any emissions going in or out. It is a very easy thing to do, low technology.

Q: You mentioned Harry Barnes' shoe, could you explain what that was?

ZIMMERMANN: Harry Barnes is a now retired foreign service officer and was one of the great foreign service people, ambassador to many countries. When he was a junior officer in Moscow, I don't remember all the details, but there was some evidence that things were getting out of one of these bubbles, so they examined the clothing of everybody that had been in a bubble. Harry Barnes had sent his shoes to a Russian shoemaker. He had big feet, and they got into the heel of the shoe and implanted an emitting device. I can remember when I was taking the security course before going to Moscow the first time, they had Harry Barnes' shoe and they showed it all around to us, and they showed us the device in the shoe. It was a very graphic indication of what even back in those early days could be done.

Q: Was security, I mean as DCM this was sort of on your plate. Was this, did you find this much of a problem for you?

ZIMMERMANN: I supervised security. Actually it was not a huge problem. I will tell you why. Because there is very little, amazingly little that is a genuinely sensitive nature that even an embassy in Moscow does. One of the things that is sensitive of course, is protecting the names of your CIA people. Even more important than that is protecting the names of their Soviet agents. But they never told any of us including the ambassador the names of their Soviet agents, so we never knew them to tell anybody. But there were very few things, and the reason I know this is because the Soviets managed to bug my secretary's typewriter for a year, so we had to assume that every cable that was typed on that typewriter was in the hands of the Soviets. When this was discovered, I was called back from vacation in Vermont to Washington to go over every cable or memo that had been typed on that typewriter for the course of a year to assess the damage to U.S. security interests. I discovered that there was nothing. There was no damage because the cables we wrote, these were cables that I wrote or the ambassador wrote. They were analytical cables which had been overtaken by events. They were a policy

recommendations which would have been of interest to the Soviets but probably of no surprise to them. They were records of meetings with Gromyko which he already knew about because he had been in the meeting, although our comments on the meetings following at the end of the cable might have been of interest to him. There were complaints to the State Department because we weren't getting this or that. These things would have been interesting for the Russians, but there was nothing that I could find that damaged in any serious way or in any way at all U.S. national security. Now that doesn't mean you don't need to have rigorous security rules, and you have to indoctrinate your people into knowing what the score is and what the enemy is doing out there. I would say with my experience of a total of five years in Moscow, that people who had Russian training before they went, people who had been prepared at least for a couple of months for this assignment, were very good at knowing when you could speak freely and when you couldn't.

Q: What was our reading on Gromyko at this time? I mean he was probably the world's most experienced diplomat. He had been going since WWII as actually ambassador to the United States, I think, during the early '40s, wasn't he?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes he was.

Q: So here we are we are talking about 40 years later. What was our reading about him and what sort of an influence he had on Soviet affairs and American relations?

ZIMMERMANN: I don't have anything that would contradict the basic view that Gromyko was a quintessential cold warrior, that he saw us as the chief adversary. What we learned in Moscow about Gromyko was a couple of things, one, he was almost entirely focused on the United States. I mean we Americans were his major and almost sole foreign policy interest. Secondly, he was an incredible workaholic. The stolid kind of exterior reflected a man who just worked all the time. Third, he probably didn't count very much in Soviet decision making. Perhaps he did at the very end when he became a member of the politburo. I think he was seen as an implementer of policy not as a creator of policy. Fourth, he actually had a very nice sense of humor which I had not been prepared for, and a kind of a sensitivity. Hartman was very tall; he is about 6'5", and Gromyko used to kid him. He would say Hartman, you have grown taller today. Next time he would see him, you have grown shorter. I remember once I was chargé. Hartman was away, and I had to take Gromyko a demarche. It was to tell him we were mining the ports, the harbors of Nicaragua which was an issue what was later taken, as I remember, to the International Court and we lost.

Q: It did. We lost.

ZIMMERMANN: We lost. But I was supposed to tell him we were doing it and why we were doing it and it had to do with Soviet meddling in Nicaragua. It was a very difficult demarche for me as my first demarche to Gromyko, to this storied Soviet foreign minister. I knew I was going to get a blast, and of course he knew what I was coming in on so he was ready. So I gave it to him in English. He read English perfectly well. He

looked at it and he read a response which was a nasty response, but he read it in a kind of a monotone to try to take as much of the edge off it as possible. I knew as I was listening to it this was exactly what was going to come out in the Soviet press word for word as it did. He then said, "Is there anything else you would like to discuss?" I said, "No, Mr. Minister." Then he, I can't remember what it was, but he made a kind of a pleasantry. It was a sort of a how are you getting along or how are you finding things. He understood I was nervous about this demarche, and he wanted to put me at ease. This was not the stereotype of Gromyko that I had been led to believe.

Q: What was your reading on how well the politburo whatever the decision making body was, I guess it was the politburo, read the United States?

ZIMMERMANN: My sense of it is, this is a bunch of 70 and 80 year olds, some of whom had never been out of the Soviet Union, others of whom even if they had, had been only to the communist bloc, very few of whom had been to the west. Of those who had, very few had took in what they should have taken in. I think their view of the United States was entirely stereotyped based on what they read in their horrible magazines and newspapers, based on what their Marxism-Leninism told them we were. My guess is that we would all be appalled if we were able, if we had been able to examine these people in any depth about their views or knowledge of the United States. I think we would be appalled at the shallowness, the failure to understand the simplest issues about America. I say this in the knowledge that even a very sophisticated Soviet can make mistakes about the United States that no American would make. For example Arbatov, the chief Americanist in the Soviet Union in the mid-1970s did not understand that Richard Nixon because of Watergate was in real danger. He didn't understand something that every American knew. I am not making the criticism because of that. I am saying these members of the politburo have only the most rudimentary knowledge and understanding of the United States. Probably worse than any leadership in any other communist country in Eastern Europe with the possible exception of Albania.

Q: Was there the equivalent of American studies that or was getting to the second layer down of the Soviet apparatus particularly communist apparatus or was this a lack?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, they could do things like studying the labor movement in the United States, and if it had a kind of Marxist zing to it, they could study it. Of course they had to study it in very stereotyped formalistic fashion without access to the kinds of documentary information that would make them objective. It was possible to study American literature, and that was done. I don't know how widespread it was but it was certainly done. I can say for one that people who in American literature who depicted decaying cultures were extremely popular in Russia, primarily Faulkner and Tennessee Williams. One day when we were in Moscow during the 1980s there were seven Tennessee Williams plays playing in Moscow. Seven different Tennessee Williams plays playing simultaneously in Moscow while we were there.

Q: I would be hard put to remember, to think of seven different...

ZIMMERMANN: I know, but they loved that, because it was a free and legal way to make the connection with their own society and its decadent nature.

Q: What about turning again to foreign relations, China. We had a I mean an ongoing relationship with China. How did that fit?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, they didn't like it. The Russians certainly didn't like it. They never wanted to talk about China with us in the Soviet foreign ministry. I don't believe we ever got to see the Chinese desk in the Soviet foreign ministry. We could see the institute people. Some of them were very good on China, but it was considered highly sensitive, high security, and we weren't privileged to have a dialog with the Soviets in Moscow on China. The Chinese embassy, which is huge in Moscow, would cultivate us, but they would never have anything to say about their relations with the Soviets. They would talk a lot about what is going on in the Soviet Union, usually missing it completely. They were not good analysts to my mind.

Q: Well, I was thinking that really they a huge Chinese embassy with probably less connections than we had.

ZIMMERMANN: I would say less connections than we had. I think that's right.

Q: And also they were inhibited by the fact that they had their own ideology to filter things through which would make it even more difficult.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I don't think there was much going on. If the Soviets talked to the Chinese, I don't think they did it in Moscow.

Q: You mentioned the middle east before and the Soviet's interest. The one big thing that happened in the middle east was the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Did that raise any tension or interest?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the Soviets, I think, saw the middle east as a chess game, as a way to diminish American power. They didn't see it as an area that affected their own security very much the way Europe did and the way China did. So, they were constantly looking for advantages over us in the middle east. Any mis-steps we might have made, they were quick to pounce on. And of course, their assets in the middle east were not too great. They had a close relationship with Syria. They had a pretty close relationship with Iraq, with Saddam Hussein. Pretty close with the Palestinians although I am not sure really in the end how close that was. We were much better placed of course, because of our relationships with Israel and Egypt.

Q: What about, you mentioned how things changed dramatically. It had been pretty bad, but after the shooting of the KAL plane over the Kamohaka Peninsula, Sakahlins.

ZIMMERMANN: It was horrendous. First of all the Soviets lied about it. Then they had a cover story which implied that the plane had been challenged and had flown away. Then there was a silence for a couple of days. I was chargé again at the time. We were beating up on the foreign ministry for information about...

Q: You might explain what this was.

ZIMMERMANN: This was a Korean airliner that took off from Alaska bound for Seoul, and probably because they fed the wrong numbers into the computer, it flew over Sakhalin island which is territorial Soviet Union, and militarily very sensitive, and was shot down by Soviet fighter planes. Apparently without any warning, although that is disputed. There was one American Congressman on board. You know it was a horrendous thing to do to shoot down a civilian airliner over your airspace. It is illegal. You are not supposed to do that. The most you can do is force it to land. It happened, as I said, right at the time we thought our relationship was improving a little bit. First they shot it down. Then they pretended it hadn't been shot down. Then after a couple of days of trying to figure out what to say, they argued that it was an American spy plane, that somehow we would use a Korean airliner to spy on what they had, what their military dispositions were over Sakahlin Island. It was just absurd. Unfortunately the administration didn't make it better by arguing they shot it down, they had orders to shoot it down from the top more or less which was never quite cleared up, and that they knew what it was. They claimed they didn't know it was civilian airliner although that didn't quite jibe with their story that it was a spy plane. In any case, it was a stupid act of brutality by a dictatorship showing in spades its paranoia. The way they tried to justify it was even stupider. That just set back the relationship for a long time.

Q: What about during this '81-'84 period, Soviet support of terrorism? What was our reading on that?

ZIMMERMANN: We didn't know much in Moscow as I recall. We assumed that they were supporting these primarily middle east organizations, but we didn't have much information on it, and it was the sort of thing you couldn't see and you couldn't get anybody to talk about.

Q: So you couldn't raise the subject particularly.

ZIMMERMANN: I am sure we raised it, but we would not get any, obviously no confirmation.

Q: Were there any lines that despite the bad relations and all sometimes there are things that are going on that are really going quite well between two countries. Were there any of those? Weather research, Antarctica?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, things like that, yes. Those were the kinds of little things I was talking about during the run up to the shooting down of the Korean plane. We were doing

some things like that. I don't remember all of them, but they were small signs that on both sides the go had been given to an improved relationship.

Q: What about student exchanges? Were these still going on or was that pretty well dead for most of this period?

ZIMMERMANN: We did have some students, so it wasn't entirely stopped. There were students. I don't remember now what the programs were, but there were some, not a lot. Not as many as in the '70s when I had been there. On the line of cooperative events going on in 1983, I was actually the head of an American delegation which negotiated an upgrade of the hot line with the Russians during that period.

Q: Could you explain what the hot line was.

ZIMMERMANN: The hot line is a communications link between the politburo or the Kremlin and the White House, so in the event of a crisis, high level communication can be made. In fact, I always thought the hot line was a telephone. It is now, I am sure. But in those days in '83 it was a teletype, very slow actually. It wasn't in the White House; it was in the Pentagon in our case. It was not necessarily a personal communication between. It could have been between anybody the president designated, and it would have been too slow to prevent a real crisis. But what we were doing in our upgrade was to speed it up so that it would have more of a crisis possibility. Not now, I have lost touch, but I am sure it is very fast and undoubtedly direct.

Q: Well, what about communications? Were they a problem for the embassy? I mean we have good communications.

ZIMMERMANN: With Washington? We had a secure line to the desk. We could talk to anybody in the State Department or the Pentagon or the White House by secure line, so that wasn't a problem. Of course, cables were very quick.

Q: Well, I am just thinking were there any other things that we haven't covered?

ZIMMERMANN: About those Moscow times? Let's see. Nothing much comes to mind. Well, there is one other thing which was an interesting sidelight on religious fanaticism on the Soviet system. When I arrived in the Embassy the new embassy hadn't been built yet. The old embassy was in a very cramped courtyard in which there were also Oh I don't know, 60 apartments. My wife and I lived in one. We were hosting seven religious fanatics, Pentecostal believers who had rushed into the embassy several years before past the guards who were all KGB, and in the mistaken hope that if they had got on to American territory and we could get them out of the Soviet Union which they dearly wanted to leave because they were being oppressed. The decision was originally taken by Ambassador Toon who was the ambassador when they rushed in to the embassy in the late '70s to take them for awhile but to make their living conditions so difficult that they would leave of their own accord. When Hartman got there, this is another example of Hartman, he looked at their living conditions. They were living in one room, seven of

them, or maybe it was two rooms. He said, "We have to do better for these people. As long as they are here, we have to make life as comfortable as we can." So we increased the space they had to live in. He encouraged people in the embassy to find ways to employ them. One of them did crocheting. They were very simple people, very poorly educated. So some of them worked and did gardening in the tiny courtyard and actually made some friends. Meanwhile we were trying to get them out, to get the Soviets to agree to give them exit permission if they would leave. Reagan got into this. This is an example of Reagan and his strong view of human beings. He heard about it and he said to Dobrynin, "Let's get these people out, I mean come on." It was actually being very bad publicity for the Soviets. It was a good idea to get them out from their point of view. But they had this neuralgia about letting anybody leave the country who wants to. So, finally one of the Pentacostals went on a hunger strike. We took the decision in the embassy that we would have the embassy doctor monitor her health, and if it got to a certain stage where it became life threatening, we would commit her forcibly if need be, to a Soviet hospital. We didn't know how long this would take. Finally after about three months, she got to that point. We had told her all this. She knew. We got to that point. Hartman was away just briefly, but I was there. I sent a cable to Washington, It was Friday, saying tomorrow is Saturday. We are going to have an embassy van take her to a Soviet hospital as agreed. Washington had approved all of this. Well, alarm bells all over Washington began to ring. I got a call from Walter Stoessel, undersecretary for political affairs, saying you have got to hold up. Judge Clark, the National Security Advisor thinks this would be terrible to send this woman out of the embassy. I said, "The choice is having her die." I said, "Look, I am sorry. I don't care what you instruct me, but she is going to a Soviet hospital tomorrow. If I am against instructions, if I have to resign, I will do it. I am not going to be responsible for the death of this woman." Walter Stoessel is a very nice man. He said, "Thanks a lot for your views." I didn't hear another word about it. It is a wonderful story. Then next morning at ten o'clock, the van came into the courtyard. She was a very feisty woman. She had many temper tantrums during the course of this hunger strike. Aged about 30. She put on her good dress; she had come downstairs, and she was saying good-bye in the courtyard to all of her friends. There were about 50 or 60 people lined up to shake her hand, kiss her and so forth. She got in the van with a lot of dignity, with an embassy officer. Driven to a Soviet hospital. An hour and a half later I get a phone call from the embassy officer. He said, "She's eating, voluntarily eating." Two hours later I get a phone call from her saying, "Thank you for doing this to me." She needed it to be done against her will. She had decided it was the right thing. The story has a very happy ending. Because of Reagan's intervention with Dobrynin, the Soviets gave her an exit visa. She had to go back to her hometown in Siberia, apply through channels and - whammo - she got it and left the country and went to Israel. Then we had the job of persuading the other six to leave the embassy. They didn't trust anybody; they didn't trust us. As Tom Simons' suggestion, he was the head of the Soviet desk, we brought in Olin Robison, who at that point was head of Middlebury College and a Baptist minister with long experience in Russia, to come and talk to the six and try to persuade them that they should leave, that what happened to the first one, would happen to them all. Of course, the Soviets would give us no assurances. That again had to do with their pride. Olin spent three days praying and arguing with them and finally they agreed to go. But they set a

condition that every member of their nuclear family would go too. So from seven it became about 35. All this was being done in Washington with Dobrynin. Dobrynin was given a list of about 35 family members. He said, "I'll do what I can." They left the embassy and went to Siberia, and they all got out. So it was a happy ending. They all were able to get out with their families. But it was interesting, their psychology was interesting, their enormous distrust of the Soviet authorities and of us. And the Soviet psychology was interesting. They wouldn't do anything that looked like weakness. They would not make a guarantee. They insisted that the dissidents go back to their home town and apply through channels, but they gave in. They gave in on something they had been very reluctant to ever concede before.

Q: Well, Warren why don't we stop at this point?

ZIMMERMANN: Okay.

Q: And we'll pick this up in '84. Where did you go?

ZIMMERMANN: '84 I was supposed to be on a Council of Foreign Relations grant, and I started it at Carnegie here in Washington. I was going to write a book on Europe. I spent the fall doing that. Then the U.S. started up a big arms control negotiations with the Soviets on all the major strategic issues. Max Kampelman was the head of the delegation. He took me along as his deputy. So, I did a year in Geneva doing that. That was actually quite fascinating.

Q: '84-'85.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right.

Q: Then we'll pick that up when you started that, great.

Today is October 23, 1998. You were saying the time you were with Max Kampelman was actually '85-'86.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. Of course the negotiation went on a lot longer. I stayed with it for about a year.

Q: What were the negotiations doing at that time?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, there were three of them. It was a very complex situation. There was the space negotiations of which the major component of it, of course, was Reagan's strategic defense initiative, Star Wars. Then there were the strategic negotiations, a pick up from the SALT I and SALT II negotiations. And then there were the intermediate range force negotiations which was a negotiation pegged to the SS-20s the Soviet Union targeted on Europe and the NATO missiles, Pershings and Cruise missiles, targeted on

the Soviet Union. So each of those for the American delegation, each of those negotiations had a leader. Max Kampelman was the overall leader for the whole negotiation, and he was also in charge of the space negotiations.

Q: What was your role?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, my role turned out to be much less than either he or I had contemplated. I was his deputy in his function as head of the overall thing. It turned out that for a variety of reasons, one of them very strong turf consciousness of the American leaders of the strategic and the IMF, intermediate range negotiations, there wasn't a great deal for me to do other than managing the administrative structure of an enormous delegation. I didn't have nearly as great a substantive role as I had anticipated.

Q: Well, what was sort of the spirit you were seeing. I mean in a way you weren't in a day to day role and working on sort of the overall, was there a spirit of optimism or frustration or how were things going?

ZIMMERMANN: That was very interesting because we had an enormous delegation. I think over a hundred people who had come out. Most of them designated to one of these three negotiations. All the major national security elements of the U.S. government were represented. The dynamic of the negotiation was that there were a number of people who had been sent out from the Pentagon to insure that no progress was made. This is of course not what they would admit except after a few drinks, but that was indeed what they were sent to do. They would report back to their defacto leader Richard Perle in the Pentagon every night or every two nights about the progress of the negotiations or in their eyes the lack of progress in the negotiation. There were others who took the more professional point of view that if American interests could be satisfied, they would go along. So, it was with those kinds of ingredients, you can imagine this was not a negotiation that moved very fast. The Russians, I think, had their own restraints on doing very much. What they wanted to do more than anything else in the world was to block the progress of the SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, because it was clear they couldn't compete with it. If it actually was built, and if it worked, it would give the United States and their allies a first strike capability, and we would have effectively won the strategic competition. So, at all costs they wanted to block.

Q: Well, what was the feeling of our delegation because the strategic defense initiative which was designed to essentially shoot down enemy missiles is still floating around, but it hasn't gone anywhere, and many people in the United States at the time including military people said this isn't going to work.

ZIMMERMANN: Again it was fascinating. You recall how this all started. It was an idea that Ronald Reagan got from Edward Teller, the old vintage Hungarian physicist and cold warrior, and it appealed to Reagan's idea that you didn't have to depend on a balance of terror or mutually assured destruction or deterrence. You could actually shoot down anything the Soviets sent over. During one of the breaks during the negotiation we were

taken to the two great nuclear laboratories, Los Alamos and Livermore where the main work was being done on the SDI. I remember asking something as a devil's advocate at both of the laboratories how long would it take before we would have an operational strategic defense. The answer at both places as I recall, I may be off by some years, this is 1985 remember. The answer was somewhere in the first decade of the 21st century. In other words this was way out, several decades out. It turned out later, we didn't know it at the time, that some of the tests for this missile system were being faked. We were told, and it became public knowledge, it was in the press, that these tests had worked, and effectively we had gotten the capability at least in the testing mode of shooting a bullet with a bullet, which is what it would be like if you were shooting down a strategic missile with a defense ballistic missile. Of course, this made an enormous impression on the Soviets, that we had the technology to do that. They always tended to give us credit for much greater technological skill than we had. In this case they gave us too much credit, because it turned out and it was admitted later I think by Teller, that these tests were faked, that we hadn't actually shot a bullet with a bullet.

Q: Well, what was the motivation for Richard Perle and his cohorts to try to stop this?

ZIMMERMANN: They didn't believe in arms control. They were opposed to arms control. They felt it would weaken the United States' defense capability. The Soviets were taking advantage of it. They simply didn't believe in it. In a way there was another interesting paradox here along the lines of you should never ask for something because someday you may get it. The American position on the IMF negotiation, which was on intermediate range missiles, was a so called zero option. Missile systems on both sides, the Soviet side, the western side had to be completely destroyed. That was our position. As it turned out that was exactly what was achieved. It turned out to be a brilliant denouement to a missile rivalry which was enormously dangerous and enormously important not only in our relations with the Soviets but our relations with the allies. I am quite sure that Perle and company devised the zero option because they were convinced that it was totally non negotiable. Of course it was for many years, but ultimately it produced a result, and these missile systems have now been totally dismantled.

Q: Did you get any feel that say our representatives from the American military establishment were people on both sides of the question, or was it pretty much they were there to stop it?

ZIMMERMANN: No, it wasn't actually so much the American military that were going to stop it. Of course they had negotiated SALT I, they had negotiated SALT II. I think they had a very keen sense of the U.S. national interest. It was the more ideological people surrounding Perle, many of them coming from - again a paradox - the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency which was founded as a result of legislation by Hubert Humphrey to promote the cause of arms control. Afterwards it was almost totally taken over by people who didn't want any arms control at all and people out of Perle's office were of the same frame of mind. There were also people on the delegation who came from the Air Force who wanted to build the SDI. This would be an Air Force thing, and

they were very strongly committed to that. So they didn't want a result either. Now the ones who would have been prepared to have a result, nobody was saying we should have a result at any cost of course. But those who were prepared to negotiate in good faith were some people from ACDA. The most outstanding of these was the ACDA counsel general Tom Graham who later became the head of our delegation to the non proliferation treaty renewal. He had been a veteran of earlier strategic arms control talks, and he genuinely wanted to negotiate on the basis of American interests. The military in general other than the ones I mentioned were prepared to do that. Kampelman himself had a very difficult job because he was known as a hard liner. At the same time he was an is a brilliant negotiator. He had to play his cards very close to his chest. He had to win the confidence of those who really didn't want any result at all, while at the same time he had to carry out the instructions which he was getting which were to negotiate in good faith. In the end, I think the result at least in the INF negotiations was a testament to his ability to take the opportunity to get a result when it is in the American interest.

Q: Were you feeling at this time, '85-'86 that a change was coming around in the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: You know, when were in Geneva, I think I am right on this, both Gorbachev and Shevardnadze became the leaders of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev became head of the party; Shevardnadze became the foreign minister. I actually had known Shevardnadze from my days in Moscow in the '70s. I had met him once. I had been traveling with Senator Kennedy in Georgia and he was the Georgia party boss. We had met him, and he was already an outstanding individual and looked like somebody who would go very far. Nobody, I think, understood then and I think he didn't either, how flexible he would turn out to be. Nobody had a sense of Gorbachev being a liberal. We had of course, all the CIA information and all the intelligence information that was amassed on Gorbachev. Not a lot was known about him, but he had visited Canada, so there was one long visit to the west. But in that year it seems to me, I went to a think tank meeting of the Columbia and Harvard schools of Russian studies which they have every year in Harriman New York. I recall that the one in 1985 was devoted to Gorbachev who had recently taken over. The consensus of all the great Russian experts from these two great universities was he was a totally traditional Soviet leader, that you could not expect any serious reforms. He would be just a younger version of what had gone on before. So, I think we in the delegation could have been pardoned for not knowing that some fairly big things were in the offing. Of course they didn't have them in arms control at least for several years more.

Q: But there is no sense that the Soviets were beginning to get concerned, say about things as simple as computers and things where information is getting out. The technical world is changing such that it is very hard to keep the Soviet system going.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I think there were certainly no Soviets we were negotiating with would ever speculate about that sort of thing. They were totally rigid in terms of what they were prepared to tell you outside the negotiating framework. You got very little from

them on things like that. I think there was a general view, and I go back to my own experience of five years in the Soviet Union that yes the technological revolution was going to leave them farther behind, was going to make their ability to keep their dictatorship working much more difficult because of duplicating machines because of computers, all the rest. But, certainly there was no sense '85 or '86 that there was going to be the collapse that there ended up being five or six years later. No sense of that at all.

Q: Well, how did you leave this position you were there, you found yourself with not as much to do as you liked.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I talked it over with Kampelman and he was very sensitive to it. In 1986 the European Bureau of the State Department, Charlie Thomas, who was the principal deputy assistant secretary for the European Bureau, went to Kampelman, had been in charge of the last CSCE review meeting and asked him if he could recommend somebody from the outside world who could be the head of the next review meeting that was coming along in the fall of 1986. Kampelman with whom I worked earlier in the Madrid CSCE meeting, knew my work and he also knew that I was a bit frustrated in this job in Geneva, he gave Charlie Thomas my name. Kampelman told me the story that Thomas said, "No, Max, you don't understand. We are not looking for a professional foreign service officer. We are looking for somebody in the tradition of Arthur Goldberg who was the first one, and yourself who was second. someone who has a national standing and could deal with all of the pressures that come with a major human rights meeting." Max said, "No, I have thought about that and I really think Warren would be the best person." So very reluctantly my organization accepted me on the strong recommendation of somebody who was not a part of my organization. Roz Ridgway who was an extremely able assistant secretary for Europe at the time, said she had opposed my being named because she thought that no foreign service officer should have to deal with the Congress on such volatile issues as human rights performance of the Soviet Union. I said, "Look, I have dealt with the Congress before. I have been in the Soviet Union." I didn't really worry about that. I thought it would be all right and it was all right.

Q: So just to get the time frame you were working with CSCE from when to when?

ZIMMERMANN: I started in the summer of 1986 with CSCE. I left the Geneva talks, I guess the spring round of '86 was the last time I was there. I spent some of the time learning some German because the talks were going to be in Vienna. We went to Vienna in September of '86 for what was called a preparatory meeting. These meetings don't have an ending date because they all work on consensus which means that any one of the 35 countries has a veto power. The meeting can't end until all 35 are prepared to have it end. So the best guess was the entire meeting would last about a year. Some optimists thought it would last six months. As it turned out it lasted over two years. We finally did get a result, but it took us nearly two years and a half to get it. So it ended actually on the day on the last day of the Reagan administration in January '89.

Q: In the first place was there a sort of hearings before going before Congress or not? Was this an appointment?

ZIMMERMANN: I had to be confirmed, and I was with no difficulties at all. Claiborne Pell was the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and there were no questions about it at all. I don't even think I had to appear. At least I don't remember appearing so if it happened it was very pro forma. The commission on security and cooperation in Europe was created to be a kind of a watchdog group of the Helsinki process. It was created by Dante Fascell a Democrat of Florida who later became the head of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. It was created over the strong objections of then Secretary of State Kissinger. There was a lot of bad blood between the State Department and the commission. The commission had members who were both Senators and Congressmen from both parties, and a large staff which participated in all of the CSCE meetings including the one for which I was the head of the American delegation. Without that commission staff we would not have been able to find enough good people from the State Department who were available to go to these long and very complex negotiations, so they did a very good job. The commission in its Washington embodiment in Congress was always there. It was always pushing us very hard for general and specific human rights progress and sometimes actually criticizing us, the delegation, if that progress wasn't apparent. This, I think, was what Roz Ridgway was talking about primarily when she said that no professional foreign service officer should have to deal with that because it is such a political thing. Fortunately, the heads of the commission were both reasonable people. Steny Hoyer from the House and Dennis DeConcini from the senate. They were people you could talk to; they would listen. They might disagree, but they both had a good deal of understanding of the process and understanding of what is possible and what is not possible. I think we were very fortunate that they were there.

Q: What was the status when you arrived in the fall of '86 of the CSCE negotiations?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, it was in a kind of shambles because there had been an earlier meeting in Bern on human contacts which was a human rights related subject. This is one of these satellite meetings.

Q: We have these baskets or so.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, and this was a satellite meeting that had been mandated by the previous review meeting, the one in Madrid. We had a head of delegation named Michael Novak who was a very prominent American theologian and one who has written copiously on human rights, but he had no diplomatic experience. This meeting which was a very short meeting, three or four weeks, had come to the end with a final document which needed approval. Novak had been a party to drafting the document as had the representations of all of the major states. All the western European countries had the strong view that the document would be approved. As it turned out when Novak looked at it the last time, he decided he would have to recommend against it, would rather have nothing than have a document which he felt was too weak. So he recommended against it,

and it caught Washington, on a holiday weekend, not a lot of people there, and a decision had to be given back to Bern very quickly. It turned out that the thing fell apart. There was no final document; the meeting ended with nothing. The United States was blamed by the Europeans for mishandling it, for going back on its word, all of that. That had been only a couple of months before we went to Vienna, so we had that problem. We had a bigger problem which was a generic problem because the CSCE process traditionally functioned on the basis of balancing off the major western interests which were human rights and the major Soviet interests which was conventional arms control. In this case, the general view was there was nothing we could give up on conventional arms control that would bring us a human rights result. Therefore, the normal tradeoffs would not be available to us and the Vienna meeting would end in failure. As it turned out, there were several reasons why it didn't end in failure. One was I think, very strong western representation on human rights issues. This had been the fruit of what Goldberg and Kampelman had done in the past in focusing the west on this issue of the importance of human rights. So, we found in Vienna that other than the traditional countries which were with us on human rights like the UK, you had Scandinavian countries like Norway and Denmark, very strong on human rights, even Sweden, the Germans tougher than they usually were on this. A number of countries that had not been very vocal in the past.

Q: Where would France fit in?

ZIMMERMANN: France was often very strong on human rights but France was not a team player and didn't much enjoy working things out particularly within NATO which is how we had to do it because we and the Canadians were not members of the European community. So the French were sometimes with us and sometimes very eloquently with us, and sometimes they weren't. We could never be quite sure. So we had a lot more western solidarity and focus on the importance of human rights; that was one thing. The other thing was that we had a Russia that was coming under...

Q: It was then Soviet Union.

ZIMMERMANN: Soviet Union coming under very intense pressures not only from the west but internally as well, and with a leader, Gorbachev, who was prepared to move further on these issues than any of his predecessors had been. Not that the Soviet delegation didn't fight tooth and claw against every concession that we asked of them, but at least by the end which was over two years later, they were ready to concede on quite a lot of things. Particularly on a thing that we wanted the most which was not a piece of paper at the end but actual release of dissidents, Jewish refuseniks and improvement in internal movement and so forth.

Q: Well, the initial signing of this treaty in Helsinki had the Soviets had received what they wanted and that was recognition of their borders, so that was no longer an item.

ZIMMERMANN: That was no longer an item although a number of columnists like Bill Safire kept talking about how this was an enormous sell out and was a terrible process and should be abolished. He later reversed himself.

Q: We wanted human rights, they wanted...

ZIMMERMANN: They wanted a fuzzy document that provided for a new, conventional arms control negotiation that would be very weak on things that would be important to us like verification. They wanted in other words to turn the CSCE into a Soviet style disarmament conference in which disarmament would all be unilateral and nobody could really verify it. It might turn out that the ones being disarmed were the critics of the Soviet Union in the western world.

Q: As you went for seeing this sort of balance the way things were, how did you think we were going to get human rights if we couldn't allow a fuzzy disarmament?

ZIMMERMANN: This is very complicated. There were the MBFR talks going on in the same city at the same time, Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions of conventional armaments. Those talks were supposed to be merged into a new disarmament conference which would take some elements from the old MBFR and some elements from what was in the arms control planks of the CSCE process. That in itself was very difficult because the MBFR negotiator who was Steve Ledogar and I had a lot of difficulty seeing eye to eye on what the trade offs would be. I think it was a natural difficulty, and in the end we worked it out. It wasn't easy. So you had that layer of complexity on top of the whole human rights aspect of it. You had to come to an end simultaneously on the same day with a document which provided for a new comprehensive conventional arms negotiation, a whole new negotiation which contained some elements in the CSCE final document which would be totally consistent with that and also with language in the CSCE final document on human rights and human contacts and freedom of information and that kind of thing. All of this had to happen simultaneously on the last day. You didn't get an agreement until all these pieces came together. And you had to get 35 countries in the CSCE phase, every one of which has a veto.

Q: Talking about the European powers, I would have thought that you would have run up against things like military something just to show their stuff and going off in different directions in Greece, not to say France. How did one sort of keep one's sanity and unity?

ZIMMERMANN: You have named the correct usual suspects I would say. Malta is a traditional spoiler in CSCE. It is the smallest, weakest country. They are constantly holding out for stupid concessions. They were not that bad in the Vienna meeting. They had been much worse before that, so they were not a serious problem. The Greeks and Turks were big problems when there was some kind of a problem between them that flared up. They would take it right into the CSCE and stonewall on everything else until they got their satisfaction, and of course, they weren't going to get satisfaction. And that happened right near the end. A Greek and Turk problem that tied us up and kept us up several nights running trying to resolve it. The French were not a member of the MBFR

negotiations, so they were very strongly opposed on a whole list of ideological issues which I won't go into, to approaches that the rest of NATO was taking. They didn't like to be members of a team, and if they had to be members of a team, the team was going to be the European Community, not NATO. We always had back to back caucuses with the European Community caucus and the NATO caucus. It turned out that the biggest spoiler of all in this meeting was Romania because the document we were working on on the human rights side of it actually was very far reaching. It was by far the most intrusive and far reaching document on human rights that had ever been negotiated up to that time. It has been superseded since because Russia got so liberal after that, but up until that time. It appears to me that the Romanian dictator, Ceausescu who it turns out was in his last year of life, hadn't paid much attention to what was going on. So his delegation was not objecting to anything very vehemently. We got into the end game toward the end, December of '88 and January of '89, the Romanians began to wake up that this document would involve all kinds of very far reaching commitments on things like freedom of religion on which their record had been absolutely horrendously bad. So, they decided to block the whole thing. They gave indication of preparing to sit us out until hell froze over, until we changed. There was, of course, the usual scurrying around trying to get, particularly the United States, to change its views to accommodate Romania. We simply refused. So we got right down to the wire, and we finally worked it out. I don't think it ever happened in CSCE before, we worked it out. The 34 of us were going to sign the document and the Romanians could do whatever they wanted. Effectively we undermined the whole consensus principle to get the Romanian off our plate. They looked very bad in the end.

Q: I was going to say if you have to have an enemy or a problem, Ceausescu is about as good as you can get.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. He didn't have a lot of support anywhere. Actually I think we won a bit with that because it made it clear that this was a document that had real bite because he was prepared to go to the wall to try to get it watered down.

Q: You must have had some very nervous Romanian delegates didn't you?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I was literally afraid that some of them would be killed. I mean it could be that serious because they were obviously not bringing home the document that their maximum leader wanted. They were visibly nervous. You were put in a terrible position of trying to do what you could for them personally but not being able and not wanting to do anything to change the document. So as far as I know they weren't killed, but there was always that danger.

Q: Very much so. I was wondering whether you were contemplating saying there is always room in the United States if you have to pull out or something.

ZIMMERMANN: We thought about it actually. We made some informal plans for political asylum if the Romanian diplomats felt it was just getting too hot for them.

Q: Were you sensing any, you had been through this other negotiation, did you sense a difference in the caliber or the outlook of the Soviet people there. We are talking about things were beginning to move all over the place.

ZIMMERMANN: The Soviets were represented by professionals not politicians. They were not high level party people, so they were very dependent on instructions. They had no flexibility. You just eventually learned to live with that. There was nothing you could do to change them until the time was right and Moscow would tell them to move. Then when Moscow would tell them to move, they moved very quickly. So, they were not an enormous factor in the negotiations in a funny way because they were puppets on a string. This was even true of their military people.

Q: How did you deal with this? I mean were you negotiating with somebody, you talk to somebody across the table. Because they were calling the shots on the other side. I mean the Soviets it was Western Europe essentially against the Soviets and their satellites wasn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Actually it wasn't like that. The Soviets began to experience some defections within the bloc. Of course they ran the Warsaw Pact meeting because the Warsaw Pact would caucus a lot- (end of tape)

Q: Could you repeat that last question?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. The question had to do with whether the Soviets controlled their Warsaw pact allies. They would run the Warsaw Pact caucuses, they would be the nominal leaders. Nobody challenged that, but the Hungarians and the Poles would come to us routinely, would come to the west and say look we can accept any language on human rights that you put together. Don't worry about us; we can fight. So, that was a pretty significant defection. The Soviets couldn't even use the Hungarians and the Poles to be their running dogs, to be their front people, to challenge western proposals, because they wouldn't do it. They had to use the East Germans and they had to use the Czechs, and they had to use the Bulgarians. Of course the Romanians would never do it for them. As time went on, those rifts became more wide. Those two eastern European countries, the Poles and the Hungarians became much more overt and unguarded about siding with the West on a lot of issues. Sometimes they would even do it in speeches and plenary sessions. So the Soviet monolith was definitely beginning to crumble, even then. This was three years before the liberation of Eastern Europe. You could see that it was beginning to come.

Q: What about on the arms business. How was this turning out?

ZIMMERMANN: I had two deputies. One was Sam Wise who was the executive director of the commission. He came from the Congress, but he was a former foreign service officer, very easy person to work with. He basically worked on the human rights side of things. Then we had Bob Frowick who was a foreign service officer with a lot of

experience in Western Europe and with NATO. He did the arms control things. He had a delegation of his own with eight or ten people. They were from ACDA; they were from the Defense Department; they were from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. They worked very well. They had the problem I told you about, that they had to interact also with this totally separate negotiation was going on, the MBFR negotiations when that was going on, to make sure everything was in sync with that. The rhythm of these things was often you would have weeks in which nothing much would happen. You would be working feverishly but there would be no results. There would be no concessions made on either side. Then a concession would come from somewhere and there would be a lot of feverish activity and that would be absorbed. Language would be written. None of this language would be final until the last day, but language would be written and set aside. So gradually you built up on all sides of the negotiations including the military side, you built up a draft document. It was the rule was nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. Agreement could be withdrawn from elements of the draft document although that was harder to do. Once you agreed to it, the precedent is very strong that it should be set aside and then just brought back on the final day and inserted as part of the final document. But, one of the things I learned was that if you don't feel you are up against a deadline, you have a lot better chance of getting what you want. The Soviets tended to, Soviet negotiators in general tended to be very slow moving, very relaxed. They like it in western cities. They never had any problems with that. The whole Moscow approach is to wait the other side out. That started with Lenin, and they still do, the Russians still do. So, the west had to over-come its natural tendency to be businesslike, to get things out of the way, to get on with the next thing. That's why this negotiation lasted two years. I worked very hard at giving the sense that we had all the time in the world. In fact, by November-December of '88, I was told by George Shultz the Secretary of State, who followed these negotiations very closely, that we really should wrap it up before the end of the Reagan period. So, we had to manipulate the idea of patience with the idea of kind of setting a deadline. But by then the Russians, I think, were ready to settle. They realized they weren't going to do any better than they were doing. They had one thing that they really wanted which we had refused to give them up until that time. It was in Shevardnadze's opening speech at the conference in 1986. It was the big surprise, and this was supposed to show that Gorbachev regime was different from anybody else, any previous regimes. They were going to have, they proposed to host a big human rights conference in Moscow. Of course that drove a lot of the conservatives in the United States up the wall. How can you have a human rights conference in Moscow, the heart of human rights violations? George Shultz I believe was a great Secretary of State and was a brilliant negotiator. He was sitting here listening to that because all the foreign ministers were there at this meeting. He had a meeting with our delegation afterwards, he said, "This is a really good idea. We are not going to accept it, but you know if we have to do it, we can give them all kinds of embarrassment right there in Moscow. So we shouldn't see this as something we never can accept. We will use it as a bargaining chip, but in the end, if we have it, it is not going to hurt at all." So, having that in mind, we went right through opposing it, and finally right at the end, the last week, we gave way on that. But then there was an issue of who would come to it. Of course the strong American view is when

you have human rights conferences of the CSCE, a lot of private organizations and individuals should be allowed to come and should be accepted as part of the conference.

Q: Amnesty International and all of that.

ZIMMERMANN: All of that. Human rights groups, former dissidents, everything. We had that in Vienna. Vienna was just packed with these groups, and they played an enormous role.

Q: They were also in Madrid in '88.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, they were that is true. So we agreed to the human rights conference in Moscow, but the Soviets were going to limit access. I knew that was a deal breaker, so a lot of the western countries who didn't care too much or wanted to finish or were a little bit weak on this would come to me, I checked with Washington of course, and said can't we give a little bit on this access question. I said, "No, I'm sorry. We just go on and on, but we can't give on that. We are not going to agree to the conference unless it has got this full access, the kind of access we have in Vienna." They came around finally because they wanted the Moscow conference. It was a big initiative. It had been publicized in their press. They didn't want to lose it. So we got that. There is an interesting coda after all of this. So the Vienna meeting ends. The day before the Reagan administration ends George Shultz comes to the final session where the foreign ministers come. It was a great celebration because it was a very good ending. We had gotten a lot of Soviet dissidents out of jail and refuseniks to the west because of the pressures of this meeting. When I was nominated for Yugoslavia, I was asked by the new president, George Bush, to come around and talk. This is a couple of months after Vienna ended. He said, "One thing I really want to talk to you about, I think you never should have agreed to that Moscow human rights conference. You should have simply refused to agree to that. It was the wrong thing to do." He was a member of the administration that was prepared to agree to it, but he personally was opposed to it. The first thought I had was to try to explain to him why it wasn't such a bad idea, which I tried to do. The second thought I had was if we had slipped into his presidency, and he had had this view of the Moscow human rights conference we would probably have been negotiating another year or two. So, it was lucky in a way that we finished. As it turned out, by the time they got to the Moscow human rights conference which was about two years later, it was scheduled very late in the cycle, everything had collapsed in the Soviet Union, and it was almost a non event because there was so much else going on that was so much more important by then.

Q: I would have thought Bush would have been on the "liberal" side on the human rights conference, the idea of having it in Moscow is a good place to do it if you could kind of display everything there. The whole idea of openness of showing the Soviets up and how we can do it.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, that is the way I thought about it, and certainly that was Shultz's view. But, you know, there was another view which is understandable too. Why do you

reward a country which has a terrible human rights record with a conference which in their manipulative press, they can use to give them propaganda advantages? There is also the feeling that it is symbolically wrong to discuss the virtues of heaven with the devil in hell.

Q: During this whole time, I mean as a foreign service officer you are somewhat down the food chain as far as you are not a private person, you have all sorts of layers of technically you are responsible to. How did you find the hand of Washington, how heavy the hand of Washington, and whence cometh the hand of Washington?

ZIMMERMANN: I think I had the luckiest situation of any negotiator I know could have had because I had terrific backup. Max Kampelman always said to me you know the first thing a negotiator does has to do, is secure his base. With the American people if you can do that, with the Congress if you can do that, and certainly with the government. I reported immediately to Roz Ridgway who was assistant secretary for European affairs, who knew this is a complex issue. A lot of people didn't understand it, but she did. She was consistently supportive, sympathetic. She had working for her very good people like Avis Bohlen who was in charge of the office in the State Department at that time that staffed our negotiation and coordinated and sent out our instructions, and Shultz himself. Every time I went back, Shultz saw me. We discussed it. We stayed on the same page. I had a very clear idea of what he wanted, and I think he understood what the realities of Vienna were. So and frankly, when it came time to give some things up in order to get some things, I had some problems with Steve Ledogar on that. He wanted to keep things going because he didn't think they had gotten quite enough. I felt it was time to cut it. We were getting about as much as we could get. I had the ear of a Secretary, and he didn't. That was an enormous advantage.

Q: Did the President play a role in this by statements or gestures or anything else like that?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I'd say none at all. I suppose he issued a statement or two, but he was not at all involved. I had no reason to think he understood or cared about what was going on. I did get my photo opportunity with him, but it was one minute or less, and wasn't substantive. I am trying to remember if we had any problems with the White House itself. Toward the end, of course, everybody always gets nervous when you are getting to the finish of a negotiation. But I don't recall that the White House gave us any difficulty at all, and I think that is a testament to Shultz.

Q: Well, also the White House was in the National Security Council a certain amount of disarray at that time wasn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. I am trying to remember who the National Security Advisor was then. That I can't remember. It was probably Frank...

Q: Carlucci was at one time the chief of I don't know, but I mean there was still the Iran Contra affair, so it wasn't a very powerful apparatus that it had been. How about

reaching out to the American public, either in the press or speeches or interviews or anything else? Did that come up?

ZIMMERMANN: I did a lot of that. Again this is a precedent set by Max Kampelman. I traveled to a lot of American cities, particularly cities with a large ethnic minorities who followed these negotiations very carefully. I did a number of op-ed pieces. We invited NGOs and individuals who were interested to the State Department. Every round, I would come back, and we would have a couple of hundred people, some of them came from very far parts of the country, who would come in for a half a day briefing on what we were doing in Vienna. It gave them a chance to air their concerns and ask questions. We took a lot of care with this because we did see this as a major public issue. Of course the Congress did it also through the Helsinki commission.

Q: What about I think just because looking at this as an historic document as we go. Some people may not understand, we use the term human rights, but what essentially are you talking about?

ZIMMERMANN: What I am talking about and the basic western view is that human rights have to do with political rights. They are rights that are not conferred by governments but are innate. They are natural rights. Free speech, free movement, freedom of ideas, those kinds of rights. The eastern definition, the Soviet Warsaw pact definition of human rights was much broader because they would throw in economic and social rights. You had to have the right to education; you had to have the right to health care which of course, we would accept too, but we would definitely put those rights on a lower level because those are rights that are conferred by governments. In our view, if you look at the Declaration of Independence for example, rights come out of the creator.

Q: Certain inalienable rights.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right. We would have enormous debates at Vienna over the definition of rights. The Soviets would say you can't have the kind of rights you think about unless you have a good health care system like we have, you know, those kinds of debates. We finally pulled the chain on them. I got a very good young officer that was a good writer, John Schmidt, to research and write a speech which contested the Soviet performance comparative to ours on the rights they thought were important. So we compared our health care system to their health care system and our education system to their education system and so forth. We didn't do too badly, of course.

Q: Did you I mean there were other Europeans, but did you yourself and your delegation realize that you were preparing in one regard almost the poison pill that was going to destroy the Soviet Union?

ZIMMERMANN: I can't say that we did. I mean we knew that we had a real opportunity to get individual cases of individual progress going. We could get prominent dissidents out. I have a letter that I have framed from Andrei Sakharov, the great Soviet physicist

and human rights advocate thanking me for the work that the U.S. delegation did in Vienna in getting him out of his exile in Gorki. We could do things like that. I think the pressure that we generated could do things like that. I don't think any of us felt we were going to have an enormously comprehensive effect on destroying the Soviet Union. I don't think we had that. We weren't visionary enough to see that.

Q: It is interesting. I mean all this is going on and it was very, I think, it was the equivalent to the atomic bomb which ended the WWII in a way. I mean, you want to put it to almost anything, this is opening up the Soviet Union.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I don't want to exaggerate what the Vienna meeting did. Jack Matlock who wrote a very good book, he was ambassador to the Soviet Union when it broke up. He wrote a very good book about the breakup. There is not a single word about the Vienna CSCE meeting. But I think he under rated it. I don't want to over rate it though. I think the Soviet Union broke up primarily for internal reasons. I think western foreign policy helped a lot, the motivating force was internal contradictions which had been there since the very beginning and finally got too great to contend with.

Q: As far as the background it was the human rights.

ZIMMERMANN: That was enormously important. I think many people who write about the CSCE process under rate the degree of importance it had in eastern Europe. Because these were small countries that were very susceptible to outside pressures in a way the Soviet Union wasn't. I met Havel, the President of Czechoslovakia for the first time in Paris at a CSCE anniversary meeting in 1990. I was introduced to him, and he said, He knew who I was which surprised me. He said, "You know, what you did with your delegation and the British and some of the others did was enormously important in overthrowing the communists and making it possible for us to get in." I think the same would be true of Poland and it would be true of Hungary. Even Bulgaria. Bulgaria wanted at Vienna to have a meeting approved that would be on the environment. My instructions were don't give Bulgaria anything. They are beyond the pale; give them nothing at all. We got to the end game, and things worked out so it seemed that maybe we had to give Bulgaria something to get other things that we wanted, so I asked Washington for permission to do it, and they reluctantly agreed, so we gave Bulgaria an environmental meeting. That environmental meeting as it turned out became an enormous rallying point for every human rights advocate in Bulgaria and they helped to overthrow the communist regime as a result of that. It was the catalyst for all of that. We had no idea.

Q: Could you talk a bit about some of your colleague delegations and all, the British, the French and maybe some other ones that you thought were particularly useful.

ZIMMERMANN: We were closest to the British. This is the Thatcher period of course. She was very strong on human rights. She wanted to be very tough with the Soviets. We had a meeting of the minds on that. The Canadians had a very ideological but very eloquent anti-Soviet head of delegation. Very unusual for the Canadians who tend to be soft on this. He was very hard line, and he was very good because he gave flaming

speeches and he was terrific. I would say were and the British and the Canadians were the furthest out in front, but as I mentioned earlier, some of the smaller western delegations, they were all run by career diplomats. There wasn't a single political appointee that I can remember in any of these delegations, running any of these delegations. These smaller delegations like some of the Scandinavian delegations, they had people who cared personally very much about individuals and the fate of individuals and individual freedoms. They were very good. These are the delegations that the Soviets normally used to be able to break down and discombobulate, but they couldn't here. So it was really a group effort I think. NATO had the usual difficulties of having to deal with the European Community. The European Community would caucus first; then NATO would caucus. If the European Community had reached a decision it would be very hard to change it in the NATO meeting even though it was mostly the same countries, but usually people were reasonable enough so that you could work things out. That usually happened. So, I think what the Soviets saw was a pretty united western front against them, and some of the neutrals were against them, too. The neutrals being neutrals tended to be somewhat soft on these issues, but there were some neutral delegations that were quite strong like the Finns and the Swedes and the Austrians. The Austrians were very strong. Even though they were the host country and had an added incentive to make sure that everybody was happy, they were quite strong. So I think it was the ultimate conclusion of people in Moscow that the west was not going to be divided, was not going to break down that led them to make the concessions they did.

Q: Did this agreement have to be ratified by the Senate?

ZIMMERMANN: No. In fact, these are very strange agreements because they are not politically binding. They are statements of intention. They don't get ratified by anybody although some countries put them in their constitution. That tended to be communist countries that went in for show. But a politically binding agreement is in many ways just as strong as a treaty. As weak as a treaty and as strong as a treaty. It is not a drawback to me that they are not solemnly signed and ratified.

Q: When you came back to the Department, did you find that there were any division within the European bureau or anywhere else about where this thing came out or was it generally...

ZIMMERMANN: I think there was a general view that it was a big success. The conventional arms people may have been somewhat less enthusiastic about it, but as it turned out, the conventional arms negotiation which our concluding document had made possible and which began early in the Bush administration produced the first real success in foreign policy for the Bush administration. This was after the President and I had this conversation. So, I think that gave even the conventional arms people the view that this had been an all around success.

Q: I was wondering the change in administration from the Reagan administration to the Bush administration both being Republican administrations, this is not the most friendly

changeover. It was almost as though there were Democrats taking over from the Republicans or vice versa. I also sense that you know, Baker who was very close to Bush. I mean they had always been close, would have carried over some of the feeling of Bush about this same reservations and all, there would have been a coolness there.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, he might have. On the other hand it was a done deal. It was too late to do anything about it. It was finished. There might have been some sighs of relief in the Baker office and around that they didn't have to deal with it anymore. It was set to one side. They had plenty on their plate to worry about, so I don't know. I was getting ready to go to Yugoslavia then and so I didn't have any sense of recrimination on the part of the Baker people. You are right. It was an entirely new State Department. They brought in different people. The old familiar ones like Roz Ridgway were gone. The people who had been involved in this were basically gone. Most of the academic writing that has been done about the Vienna has meeting have given it extremely high marks as sort of a watershed in East-west relations and progress for human rights. Dennis DeConcini was very critical of us in the end game in the fall of 1988. We were beginning to get some very sharp criticism from the commission to the point where our allies in Vienna began to worry whether we could hold up under it. We stuck with it, finished, and then the hearing following the end of Vienna which was already in the Bush administration DeConcini very magnanimously said to me in open hearing that he had been wrong. We got the best result we could have and he had been wrong, that and the academics have seen it that way too. Safire had reneged on his views that the CSCE process was just a tool to be manipulated by the Soviets. I think it came out very well. Obviously none of this would have happened or at least not the way it happened if it hadn't been for Gorbachev.

Q: Was there any feeling, you came back before you got involved in Yugoslavia, that, okay, now we have got this what are we going to do with it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes there is some of that. Of course, they went right into a conventional arms negotiation. There was to be a CSCE summit down the road. I forget when that happened. But the process continued. I was replaced by Jack Maresca in Vienna. The meetings went on. CSCE began to broaden its mandate to deal with a lot of different things that it had never dealt with before, creating centers for human rights, high commissioners for minorities, voting monitor groups and so forth. Peacemaking efforts, mediation efforts. It became an entirely different process because the cold war that had spawned it was over, and it needed to find a new set of things to do. I think it is beginning to do that and doing it quite well.

Q: I thought this might be a good place to stop because I would rather take Yugoslavia as a whole rather than to get... So we will pick this up again in 1989 in Yugoslavia, and we haven't gone in to how you got the appointment and all that.

Today is May 27, 1999. Warren, it was obviously a natural, but that doesn't mean anything in the world of ambassadors. How did you get the appointment to go to Yugoslavia?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I am not entirely sure because there was a great tendency in the Reagan administration to name political ambassadors to places that seemed interesting. I was told in the State Department that my knowledge of Serbo Croatian was probably what tipped the balance between me and a political appointee. So I was named during the Reagan administration, but I was still finishing the negotiations in Vienna. It went on a lot longer than anybody thought, so I had to be reappointed by the Bush administration. But since I was already the Reagan administration's candidate, that turned out not to be a problem.

Q: Well, you went off there when?

ZIMMERMANN: I went in March of 1989.

Q: What was your reading getting from the desk and what you had been picking up in the corridors of the State Department and OSCE and all on Yugoslavia at that point?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the only name you heard was Milosevic, he was already dominating the analysis of Yugoslavia, what he did, what he didn't do, what he wanted to do, where he was going. Practically even if he sneezed, that was the subject of intelligence analysis. That in itself was very different from the previous period because that was of course, dominated by Tito, and no republic had a figure who was as powerful as Milosovic was already in Serbia.

Q: Well, did you have either instructions guidelines or what were you supposed to do when you went out there?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I did have instructions, and as it turned out, the Bush administration was full of people at the top who knew a lot about Yugoslavia. In the National Security Council, the National Security Advisor was Brent Scowcroft who had been an assistant air attaché in the embassy in Belgrade. The deputy secretary of state was Lawrence Eagleburger who had been ambassador to Yugoslavia and had served there twice and had actually been on the board of several Yugoslav corporations, so there was no lack of interest and knowledge about Yugoslavia in the Bush entourage. I did have a long meeting with Eagleburger which we worked out an approach to the Yugoslav government which was a new government then too because the prime minister had resigned and a new prime minister was about to take office. The decision was made by Eagleburger and communicated to me orally, and then I got it in the form of written instructions, to reiterate that the United States continued to support Yugoslavia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity which was a kind of a code word for saying we supported Yugoslavia as independent from any possibility that the Russians would try to dominate it. But I was also instructed to add that we were very concerned

about human rights practices in Yugoslavia and particularly in Kosovo. That the unique position of Yugoslavia in the cold war no longer applied because now eastern Europe was beginning to be liberated. Poland and Hungary were already truly independent countries with westernizing governments and market reforms underway. So that Yugoslavia no longer had a monopoly as an independent westward leading eastern European country. I was to communicate that, that we would not treat Yugoslavia with the same degree of exceptionalism that used to treat it. That meant we would subject Yugoslavia to the same kinds of tests, economic tests, human rights tests that we subjected other countries to.

Q: What was the reading you were getting on Kosovo. Milosevic had made his speech in '87 I think. He had already made his changes hadn't he?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, he actually came to power at the end of 1987 on the Kosovo issue, arguing that the previous Serbian administration had not been sufficiently sensitive to the plight of the Serbs who lived in Kosovo. Milosevic came to power on a Serb nationalist position having to do with Kosovo, and he was very tough on the issue. In fact, shortly after we arrived he got the Serbian parliament to take away all of the civil rights, civil liberties and cultural rights that the Kosovo Albanians had enjoyed. So, in effect he staged a coup d'état against the government and got his own people into power there and turned Kosovo effectively into a colony. This was all happening in the first several months that I was in Yugoslavia.

Q: Well, were you getting a profile or anything like that from the CIA about Milosevic and his wife?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the CIA made a practice of doing psychological descriptions of major world leaders, particularly the ones that they had reason to suspect would turn out badly. I do recall that Milosevic was described as one who was very much addicted to power, a strong opportunist, somebody who was very authoritarian in his approach. All these factors were confirmed to me very quickly when I finally got to know him. But he was seen as a major Serb nationalist with a lot of potential for creating difficulties for the rest of Yugoslavia.

Q: What about the rest of Yugoslavia, Tudjman, and Croatia. Well, let's sort of go through it. What about Croatia?

ZIMMERMANN: All right. Croatia was still under communist leadership, and very retrograde communist leadership. It was not a reform communist government in Croatia. Tudjman was at that point in early 1989 a minor nationalist politician who had done jail time for nationalism in the Tito period. So, Croatia was not the nationalist opponent of Serbia, at least not to the extent that it became, that it was a year and a half later. Slovenia was the most interesting of the republics because it had a progressive reform communist leadership under Milan Kucan who is still the president of Slovenia which was prepared to organize Slovenian elections and to leave power if the communist party lost the elections. That is in fact what ultimately happened in 1991, and they did leave power.

They were at the time I arrived in Yugoslavia, without any question the most liberal communist regime in the world.

Q: What about Bosnia-Herzegovina. Was that even considered a separate place or was that just neutral ground?

ZIMMERMANN: No, it was considered a separate place. It was an independent separate republic. It was one of the six republics. It had a somewhat corrupt communist leadership that played the national key very carefully. It had just so many Muslims, so many Serbs, so many Croats in positions of power. Certainly not reformist, not particularly western oriented, kind of a sleepy communist rule. Macedonia was at that point not reformist either although it became quite reformist well before it became independent. Montenegro had just undergone another coup d'état like Kosovo orchestrated by Milosevic which brought into power a young leadership, some of them in their 20s who talked a good game on economic reform but turned out to be pretty close to Milosevic, and the ones that weren't were quickly purged out of that leadership, which quickly fell under the control of Momir Bulatovic who is now prime minister of Yugoslavia.

Q: What about was Vojvodina there or was there any problem with the Hungarians?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, there was a problem with Vojvodina. Milosevic was unhappy with the government there which, - I don't think it was a primarily Hungarian government because Hungarians are a minority in Vojvodina - but it was not to his liking; it was not loyal to him. He managed to stage a coup against that government too and put his own people in, who I found to be among the most retrograde hard line Soviet style communists of any that I met in Yugoslavia. Milosevic's methods were very interesting. He used street tactics. He would amass demonstrations often by busing people in, huge numbers of people who would call for the downfall of whatever government it was he didn't like. He did this in Montenegro; he did it in Kosovo, and he did it in Vojvodina. Of course it was part of his tactic in Serbia as well. He would mobilize crowds to press for the kinds of things he wanted.

Q: Well, when you arrived there, I mean he was your person to deal with in this country wasn't he?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, no, he wasn't because of course, I was accredited to the government of Yugoslavia. The President of Yugoslavia was an eight person hydra headed institution called the Yugoslav presidency. It was composed of representatives of all six Yugoslav republics plus representatives from Kosovo and Vojvodina. Every year, the president of the presidency would rotate from one of these republics to another. I don't think that Kosovo or Vojvodina which were not republics got the president of the presidency. But the republics did. When I presented my credentials to the president of the presidency, it was a Bosnian Muslim, Raif Dizdarevic. He was the man to whom I first used my instructions in expressing concern over what was going on in Kosovo. After that, I called on other members of the Yugoslav government including the new prime minister,

Ante Markovic, who was a reform minded westernizing Croatian. The foreign minister Budimir Loncar, who was a Croat and an old communist but one who was very willing to modernize and reform, and other cabinet level people in the Yugoslav government. That was what I did first. After that I would go around and talk to the republican presidents in the republican governments because that is where the power in Yugoslavia lay. So, I put in requests to see all six of those, and the requests came back quite promptly from five of them that they would be very glad to see me. The sixth was Serbia. I put in a request to see Milosevic who was the president of Serbia, and the answer was that Serbian government does not deal with foreign ambassadors; that was for the Yugoslav government to do. I think it became clear that this was not a very tenable position for the Serbs to take since I was talking to the Slovenes and the Croats and all the others. But then a major event intervened. It was the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo which had taken place in 1389, June 28, which was a Serbian defeat at the hands of the Turks. But it has always been celebrated in Serbia as the Serbian national day. Milosevic was going to make a major speech in Kosovo in front of one million people on the actual battlefield. The Serbian foreign ministry, every republic had a foreign ministry, the Serbian foreign ministry invited the diplomatic corps, all of the members of the diplomatic corps, to go down and sit as honored guests to listen to Milosevic's speech. We were to be given a special train to go from Belgrade to Kosovo to do that. I discussed this invitation with my staff and it didn't take us more than a few seconds to reach the conclusion that it would be a bad idea for the American Ambassador to go to this speech because in the first place we had no idea what Milosevic was going to say. He might have been insulting to the Albanians and we would have been captive bit players in his theater for whatever he wanted to do with regard to his nationalist aims in Kosovo. So we decided I would not go. We didn't even bother to ask Washington for instructions because we knew that they would agree with us as they did. Other embassies, other ambassadors called me up to ask what I was doing. We all got the invitation on the same day, and I said I wasn't going and I would give my reasons. It turned out that the European Community which met as a body reached a decision not to go. As I remember it, the only European ambassador who went was the Turkish Ambassador who said he went because he had a different view of the battle since his country had won it. Milosevic was very upset, I learned later. He blamed me for the fact that almost none of the western embassies had gone, and he decided simply to refuse to see me. That was a boycott that lasted until January of 1990, so I had been in the country almost a year before I got to see the primary politician in it.

Q: Well, you have got these republics. The power center was Serbia.

ZIMMERMANN: Serbia was and always had been the largest republic in Yugoslavia with a plurality but not a majority of the population. But it was not the most developed republic. Croatia and Slovenia were certainly more developed, more prosperous economically than Serbia was. Serbia was saddled until Milosevic came along with an anomalous position the Yugoslav presidency because Kosovo and Vojvodina members of the Presidency could vote Serbia down on any particular issues. They had two votes combined against Serbia's one which was a situation Milosevic changed very quickly in

1989. So, Serbia, yes, was in a sense the most important republic, but at that point it wasn't obvious that it was going to be the most successful or the most powerful republic.

Q: Let's say if something is done in Kosovo, is that a Yugoslav problem or a Serbian problem from your perspective?

ZIMMERMANN: That was a Serbian problem. From my perspective as an analyst, it was a Serbian problem because only the Serbs counted in Kosovo. Yugoslavia as Yugoslavia had almost no power in Kosovo. In fact just before I got there, the Serbs requested from the Yugoslav federation that the Yugoslav army be reinforced in Kosovo to protect the people of Kosovo, Serbs. The Yugoslav presidency complied with that despite the fact that at least some of them would have objected to it, the Slovenes and the Croats certainly. And the man to whom I presented my credentials, the Muslim Dizdarevic, would have objected to it as well. The Serbs got their way partly I think, because no republic wanted to assert the power of the Yugoslav federation over other republics because they all wanted their own autonomy. So they basically gave the Serbs a free hand in Kosovo. Now, in the end, this did not set well with the Slovenians who began to understand that to the degree that the Serbs were oppressing the Albanians in Kosovo, to that same degree it would become difficult for Yugoslavia to join the European Community and the other European organizations. In other words, the Slovenes drew the conclusion that Serbian policy in Kosovo was dragging the whole country down and making it impossible for the more progressive republics like Slovenia to move toward Europe. That was really the thing that began the movement toward the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Slovene calculation that they couldn't do it in Yugoslavia, they had to do it independently.

Q: So, Kosovo is the river that runs through it.

ZIMMERMANN: Absolutely. Kosovo was the origin of the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Q: Where were we when Milosevic was pulling his coup in Kosovo, this is right after you arrived wasn't it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes.

Q: Did we protest or do anything?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, we did protest to the Yugoslav government. We didn't have any access to the Serbian government because Milosevic wasn't prepared to see any American representatives. We did protest and indeed we did it publicly through the press spokesman in Washington.

Q: I was going to say did you feel at this point if the president of Serbia isn't going to talk to you, you can talk to him through politica or blurba or...

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I had maintained a very low profile in terms of the Yugoslav press when I first arrived, because I knew that I had a message that would be not very well received in Serbia, and therefore I wanted to keep it low key and private. When it became clear that we weren't able to see responsible Serbian politicians, I got Washington's authorization to go more public. I did an interview I think the first one was in Borba which was a major relatively moderate by then Yugoslav newspaper. I did an interview I think in June which touched somewhat lightly on the Kosovo problem expressing some concern about what was going on there for the U.S. Yugoslav relationship.

Q: What was the reading you were getting in your embassy including both from your political officers, USIA, CIA, and others as far as what was going on. What had been going on in Kosovo vis a vis the Kosovars versus the Serbs there?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, during the 1980s we believed that successive Kosovo governments which were mainly run by Albanians were not very friendly to the Serbian population there. To that degree the Serbs had a grievance against the Albanians in Kosovo. Of course, it was that grievance that Milosevic heard in 1987 when he went down there and used as the road to power. After he took over, by 1989 when he had more or less replaced the Albanian governments that he didn't like in Kosovo, he launched a major crackdown which effectively destroyed the Albanian majorities in the government, in the parliament, and even in cultural institutions like the University of Pristina, which was a major Albanian language university. It was a kind of coup d'état in which he simply divested the Albanians, who were 90% of the population, of their political rights. That is what we were seeing, and it happened quite fast in the early part of 1989. What had been for him a bone in his throat, a real problem not only because of their normal votes against him in the Yugoslav presidency but also because the Serbian Jerusalem as they called Kosovo was in the hands of infidels who were not respectful of Serbs. He turned that around and by the spring of 1989, Kosovo was effectively a colony. I visited it the first time in June or July; I think it might have been July. I didn't want to go right away because I did not want to look non objective in this, so I visited the other republics first before I went to Kosovo. But when I went there, I was very scrupulous to spend half my time with the Serbian administration and the other half with Albanian dissidents. It was clear that the Albanians had been totally cowed by Serbian power. I recall my first cable on my trip to Kosovo was based on a movie which was popular at that time in the United States called Mississippi Burning. It was about race.

Q: FBI and the Ku Klux Klan or something.

ZIMMERMANN: It was race discrimination in the '60s I think, or in the '50s in the South. I titled this cable "Kosovo Burning" because I believed that the prospects that Kosovo would blow up were both great and imminent.

Q: What were you getting from both sides of the, both the Albanians and the Serbs there?

ZIMMERMANN: Actually the prime minister of Kosovo was an Albanian. He was the sort of person the Serbs referred to as an honest Albanian, that meant Albanian Quislings, people who supported Serbs. He had a Serbian wife. My meeting with him was horrifying in one sense. He was very nervous, and there were a lot of people around him. He did not meet me alone with one or two aides. There quite a lot of people in the room. They seemed to be watching very carefully what he said. He went through the line which was everybody's got their rights in Kosovo; it is absolutely wrong that the Albanians have been deprived of anything. I said, "It doesn't seem to be the view of too many observers." Did he have any idea what the future would be and what should be done in the future. "Yes," he said, "all political prisoners should be released." At that point I looked around and saw some of these hard act characters who were watching him and did not look very happy. I noticed that this was a proposal that was never again repeated. You would talk to Serbs who were high up in the administration or important in cultural affairs or in the parliament, and they would be very arrogant about the Albanians. The Albanians on the other hand, seemed very cowed, I thought. I met Rugova for the first time who was the formal head of the Albanian movement, a cultural figure. He was a poet. I met him in the union of writers building in Pristina, and they didn't seem to have an idea of what to do. It was pretty clear they did not feel that they had any power base to speak of except the people themselves in Kosovo. Ultimately they worked out a strategy which was to pull out Albanians from every institution including hospitals and schools that they weren't already expelled from, in other words try to take the trend the Serbians had started to keep the Albanians out, take it even to a higher degree by pulling themselves out thereby creating a situation in which you had two cultures in Kosovo which did not rub up against each other very much. This was very different from Bosnia where there was always, even during the war, a lot of interchange among the different ethnic groups.

Q: How bad had the Albanian rule been? I mean were prisoners, killings, beatings, looting whatever?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, on a scale of 10, we could say what the Serbs were doing to the Albanians was about nine, but what the Albanians had been doing to the Serbs was about three. There was no deprivation of political rights or very little. There were individual instances of abuse that were probably not followed up, prosecuted. But Serbs had scrapbooks full of all kinds of alleged atrocities, and very few of them stood up to the objective scrutiny of various NGOs, the non-governmental organizations, that would go down there and investigate them.

Q: Well, when you were back in Belgrade, what about Belgrade society? I am not talking about the literati, but the intellectuals, the government people and all. How did you find yourself received there?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, very well. The United States has always had a good relationship with Yugoslavia and a good relationship with Serbia. Belgrade was a Yugoslav city for five days a week. You could find Croats, Slovenes, people from all the republics who were there because they had work to do in Belgrade. On weekends, Belgrade was a

Serbian city because all of the Slovenes, the Croats, the others had gone home for the weekend, and I really mean all. Very few stayed around. Then it was a Serbian city, and a very pleasant and attractive Serbian city, I thought, with that kind of seediness that comes with the Balkans and a lot of liveliness that comes with people who are energetic and have views on all kinds of things.

Q: Did you find, as we are doing this interview right now, we are in the midst of a bombing campaign of bombing Belgrade and Kosovo, and we are essentially at war with Serbia. One of the things that has struck me, I mean it hasn't surprised me is on the interviews of sort of plain Belgrade Serbian citizens how they dismiss the Albanians I mean almost as though they are not real people. How did you find, did the plight of the Kosovars raise any sympathy at all with your Serbian friends or acquaintances?

ZIMMERMANN: Outside of the few human rights activists I would say that there was zero concern among the Serbs I knew for Kosovars, even among people who should have known better.

Q: Intellectuals, university types,

ZIMMERMANN: Exactly. I remember sitting at dinner next to a very nice looking well dressed Serbian woman in her 40s who was an art historian, spent many years in New York, knew the west very well, knew the United States very well. We were talking about the Kosovo problem. She said, "The way to solve the Kosovo problem is to line the Albanians up against a wall and shoot them all." Now there may have been a bit of facetiousness in that remark, but even if she didn't mean it literally, it showed a kind of unconcern for other human beings that was pretty appalling.

Q: Well, in a way, it reflects attitudes. I always think of the quote of Golda Meier one time in Israel. "There are no such thing as Palestinians". These are people who got in their way.

ZIMMERMANN: And I am afraid that the popularity if you can call it that at least the support that Milosevic has gotten from a large majority of the Serbian people is because Kosovo is his big issue, and because in many ways, they agree with him on Kosovo.

Q: As one went on, were we laying down any lines of don't mess with Kosovo or anything like that early on when you arrived?

ZIMMERMANN: Early on, the line we took was that what Serbia is doing in Kosovo is making it impossible for Yugoslavia to really be a full member of the west, to come in for the kind of benefits that being a western country involves. The way the Hungarians and the Poles and the Czechs are doing. So, there was that. You are depriving yourself of economic and other benefits by taking this position. You are certainly complicating the relationship between Yugoslavia and the United States. And we were very active, I had Washington's full backing on this, in trying to persuade Milosevic to deal with the

Albanians to try to find a way out of this problem of two cultures and of a colonial approach that Serbia was taking toward Kosovo. We were urging him for example, to at least talk to Rugova the Kosovo leader. He was totally dismissive of that. He refused to talk to Rugova. He said, "Who does he represent?" Well, he represented 2,000,000 citizens of Serbia, but Milosevic wasn't prepared to recognize that. So he had ten years, between 1989 and 1999 to deal with the Kosovo problem, and he never lifted a finger to do anything. He simply refused to accept that there was any problem there. Serbs are running Kosovo against the wishes of 90% of the people who live there. As far as he was concerned, that was just fine.

Q: Well, I don't know what you saw. We are talking about 1989 which was one of the great years certainly in western European history. The Soviet Union, I mean Germany united, satellites basically broke free. It was certainly a rollback of the Soviet Union which later became Russia, but I would have thought watching this movement and seeing Hungary on their border doing things and Czechoslovakia and all, there would have been business interests who wanted to see boy this is a great opportunity to get ourselves into the west. I would have thought the Yugoslav national army would have said you know, we don't want to keep aligning, we have never been fully into it, but to look to the Soviet Union for their stuff. It is obviously on the way out. They would want closer ties to the United States and all. Was there any feeling of academics you know? The west is where they all should have been pointed.

ZIMMERMANN: There was a lot of feeling among business and economic interests that Yugoslavia's future ought to be in the west. There also was a feeling that Yugoslavia had had a kind of a favored position economically with the west, and that would go on. I think people failed to take account of the extraordinary things that did happen in 1989 with the liberation of eastern Europe and the beginnings of the unification of Germany. Yugoslavia was no longer unique. There were economic reforms going on in at least three other countries in eastern Europe which were more aggressive and radical than what Yugoslavia was doing. I think people failed to take that on board. Plus, the main business interests who had a concern about joining the west were in Slovenia and Croatia, and they were opposed to Milosevic doing what he was doing in Kosovo. When they decided they couldn't change it, this is particularly true of the Slovenes, they decided that maybe they should get out. So the business interests were in effect neutralized. As far as other interests are concerned in Serbia, nationalism was so powerful because there was this feeling that Serbian history is full of the concept of victimization. The Serbs are always the victims of everything. And then there was a real set of grievances in Kosovo. They were real, not as important as charged, but real. Milosevic exploited this. He used a hard core of nationalists to do it, but he won the support of a much larger group of people, and when you think in terms of nationalism you stop thinking in terms of economic advantage. The two are almost antithetical. Nationalism becomes so important to you and you forget or you don't consider what kind of a price you may be paying economically.

Q: Where did you look at Milosevic's hard core support? Were these country boys or was this the working class? I mean you get to the really hard core and then you get the ones who flock to the nationalist banner.

ZIMMERMANN: I would say he got his support from two major elements. One was the intellectuals. Serbian intellectuals belong I think in one of the circles of hell for what they did to their own country. The whole idea of victimization in Kosovo, the whole idea of what Serbia should do to right the wrongs done to it in Kosovo came out of the Serbian Academy of Sciences, this body of Serbian intellectuals. Milosevic tapped into them in a very major way, so they bear a lot of the blame for what went on, because they gave a kind of intellectual patina to what was a very ruthless power grab. Secondly, I think it was a rural phenomenon. Milosevic, somehow was able to portray himself as a defender of the Serbian orthodox faith when he was a communist his whole life, and presumably an atheist. Nonetheless he did, and I think in rural areas of Serbia, he had a lot of support among people who were not very well educated and who responded very strongly to Serbian nationalism. In urban areas there was less support although there was a kind of a national hypnosis that went on for some time. It seemed as if he could do no wrong; he was so popular. But when the hypnosis wore off, his core supporters were the intellectuals, were the peasants, and to a degree of course, the police and to some degree the army also.

Q: Within the army, was it pretty much a Serbian army core, as core of officers?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I think more than 50% of the officers in the Yugoslav army in 1989 were Serbs. There is nothing nefarious about that. The military tradition is very strong in Serbia.

Q: Just like ours always come from the south.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right, it is the same sort of thing. But the defense minister, they are always generals in the Serbian Army, the defense minister was part Serb, part Croat. His father had been one and his mother the other. He certainly thought Serbia; he didn't think Croatia. He hated, for example, Tudjman when he came along. But the head of the air force was a Croat. The number three in the army was a Slovene, and he stayed with the army even after Slovenia declared independence. So it was by no means a Serbian monopoly at the top.

Q: Could you talk about the role of the Serbian Orthodox Church because this as we saw at the time because looking at it now in 1999, the church doesn't seem to have played a mediating role. It seemed be sort of right there with the nationalists. How did you find it at the time?

ZIMMERMANN: You described it exactly. The Serbian church throughout history has always been a national church. I mean the Serbian Orthodox religion is exactly synonymous with Serbian nationalism and the Serbian people, and the church has always

seen its role as the cutting edge of Serbian nationalism. It was that way in the Serbian revolts against the Turks in the 19th century. So the church was playing a traditional position, a traditional role when it supported Milosevic's nationalism. The only thing that was a bit paradoxical was that he was a communist. Nevertheless, I think the church helped him a lot in blowing away the more moderate opposition he might have had. The Serbian church at least in my experience tends to be run by elderly patriarchs who are usually a little bit at sea when it comes to political nuances and are probably quite easily manipulated by younger people lower down who have the spark of nationalism about them.

Q: Well, you know, we are both veterans of this era in Yugoslavia, but looking at this, I have always thought the church and to some extent the Serbian mothers were responsible for passing on this poison of nationalism. It permeates. There doesn't seem to be anybody saying this is wrong. I mean we have had our problems with civil rights in the United States but at a certain point we kind of worked our way out of it.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I would put it this way. I think there is an enormous sense of fatalism in Serbia, that things are always going to be the way they always were. Serbia will always be victimized. Serbia will always have to fight for itself, and the mothers I think are in a sense the carriers, maybe more than any other group of this feeling. This obsession with the past retracing the tragic history of Serbia for every visitor who comes. I have probably listened to stories about the Battle of Kosovo a thousand times despite the fact that I know by now what happened there. But it would have been impolite not to let one Serb after another tell me about that battle and about how Serbia was so greatly wronged by everybody. If you are that fixated on the past, you are not really looking at the future. You are not really looking at what can be done to get you out of the past. Of course, Milosevic played to this fatalistic tendency extremely brilliantly.

Q: Because in a way when we think about our race problems, in a way it was sort of the moderate business intellectual community who came and said we have got to do something about this, that brought about the real change.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, and that happened in South Africa as well. Many people think that that situation turned for the better when the business community finally went to the white leadership and said we can't take this any more. You didn't have that factor in Serbia, partly because the business community was a communist business community. They were a part of the party structure because business was not important to them. They weren't that successful at it. Not as successful as Croats and Slovenes were in business. It wasn't their thing.

Q: Well, as this was building up, at the end of '89, Germany unites. I think we will stop at this point here. Next time, I'd like to develop more what happened. I mean, we are talking about towards the end of '89 when eastern Europe became free essentially, and its effect on Yugoslavia, particularly unification of Germany and the fall of the whole communist system to which Yugoslavia belonged, and also of course, Ceausescu in Romania and his

demise. Also at this point too, we talked about Kosovo when you first arrived, but something else I want to ask is the role of other western embassies particularly on Kosovo and on keeping Yugoslavia together. So we will pick those points up next time.

Today is May 15, the ides of May, 2000. Warren, we will pick it up then, you already arrived. Do you want to pick it up sort of where you were.

ZIMMERMANN: Okay. I think we talked about my first visit to Kosovo which was the major bilateral problem between the United States and Yugoslavia.

Q: Just before Milosevic made his speech. He made it in '88, was it?

ZIMMERMANN: No, he made his speech. Well, there were two major Milosevic speeches on Kosovo. The first one was when he went down there as a Serbian party secretary and listened to the complaints of the Serbs in Kosovo and uttered the immortal words, "Nobody should ever beat you." Then he went back and turned upside down the whole Serbian party and got rid of the leader who was his patron, got himself made head of it and then started a very tough policy on Kosovo. The second speech was June 28, 1989, the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo. June 28 as you remember is a big day in Yugoslav history. It was also the day the Archduke was assassinated in Sarajevo in 1914. Milosevic gave a huge speech there before nearly a million people.

Q: Were you there?

ZIMMERMANN: No, I wasn't. If we haven't talked about this it is actually quite important. I had been trying to see Milosevic from the time I got there. It was, after all, across a couple of city blocks from where the American embassy was, and I was going to all the other republics, to Slovenia and Croatia and Macedonia and so forth to talk to the heads of the party and the heads of the government there. Milosevic was the only one who wouldn't see me. We kept asking why that was, and the answer came back from Serbian government protocol, "Well, Milosevic is the president of a republic, so he doesn't deal with foreign ambassadors. That is up to the Yugoslav government, not the Serbian government," which didn't seem to hold back the presidents of the other five republics. I assumed he was mad at me because the original message I carried even in the presentation of my credentials, my initial calls was we were very disturbed at what was going on over Kosovo. So Milosevic decides to have a big rally in Kosovo, and several days before it, not more than a week before it, the embassy gets a note from the Serbian protocol saying that Milosevic is going to give a speech. The diplomatic corps is all invited, and a special train will be laid on for them to go down to Kosovo and attend the speech. Well, I called my staff together when we got that. I don't think it took us more than a minute or two to decide it would not be a good idea for the American ambassador to go down as a kind of a captive audience to listen to Milosevic berate the Albanians or whatever he was planning to do. Of course, we would have no idea what he was planning

to do. It was just not a good scene. I let Washington know my intention was not to go, and they approved that right away. Then I began to get calls from other colleagues, other ambassadors who were saying what are you doing about this invitation. I said to everyone, I am not going. I explained why, because it would put us in a kind of a captive position where we would be seen to be endorsing whatever it was he said, and we didn't know what it was going to be, and it didn't sound as though it was going to be very good for harmony in Kosovo. As it turned out, I don't think any of the NATO ambassadors went except the Turkish ambassador. He went for his own reason which was that the Turks had won the battle of Kosovo. He was going in a victorious mode down there. We could all understand that and that was fine. But the important thing was there was no NATO position on it, and I certainly was not trying to convince others not to go, I simply was explaining why I wasn't going myself. Well, Milosevic read that as an attempt by the American ambassador to prevent all of the western European satellites of the United States from going to his big party, and he was insulted, and he held it against me personally. I never did get to see him for a whole seven months. I didn't get to see him until I had been in Yugoslavia almost a year. As a matter of fact, the speech was quite rabble rousing. He talked about the possibility of coming war for example. So I think we were confirmed in our judgment not to attend it.

Q: Then after the speech and all, work was not just with Serbia of course, I mean you had the other five republics and all. How did you find your ties with these various ones. I mean were things beginning to split up? Were there various attitudes?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, every other republic, all the other five republics were enormously friendly to the United States and to me personally. When I would go to these republics, initially and then again, the president of the republic and the head of the party, the top officials, would always be available. Usually they would give me a dinner or a lunch, and we would have very interesting and frank talks. This was true of all of them. It was true of Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Montenegro is quite interesting because it had just undergone a kind of a coup d'état in which a bunch of young people had come in, some of them very closely tied to Milosevic, but some of them not. But even there, there was a lot of cordiality, a lot of interest in the United States. Of course, just at this time, there was a new prime minister of Yugoslavia, Ante Markovic who was a reform minded Croat. He had been a businessman. He had been an official in the Croatian communist party. He had very western ideas about how to develop the economy. He had seen what was going on in Hungary next door where they were on a take off point with their economy and getting a lot of help from the United States. He wanted to do the same in Yugoslavia. He was very impressive to talk to. I took George Soros to see him once, and Soros left the meeting after we had two hours of the Markovic treatment saying, that was the most impressive leader he had met in eastern Europe.

Q: Soros being...

ZIMMERMANN: George Soros being the multi billionaire financier and a man who had already founded a very effective organization for democratic assistance to eastern Europe called the Open Society Institute. So, Markovic was trying to make his mark on the United States, and I felt that my job was to persuade Washington that he was a good man, he was trying to do all the right things, but he had much bigger problems in doing them than the leaderships in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland which were getting most of our assistance, rightly at that time. Markovic's problem was he had almost no power. He was constitutionally speaking, the weakest prime minister in all of Europe, maybe in the world, because of the way Yugoslav power was broken up and the degree to which power resided in the republics rather than the central government. So Markovic had an uphill fight all the way. We had a U.S.-Yugoslav trade association which would meet every year in Yugoslavia, usually on the coast. It met close to Dubrovnik in 1989. Markovic came down and talked to the group, American businessmen mostly, and they were enormously impressed with him. They shared the view that we had in the embassy that this was a man who was really trying to do some very good things. So on the one hand there was a kind of a euphoria because Yugoslavia had a prime minister who was really trying to make it a fully western country, and democratize it as well. At the same time it had all of these problems with rising nationalism and with the fact that there was no central control at all, and therefore the nationalisms that existed in different republics were unchecked. There was really no way to stop them. There was no way, for example, to stop Milosevic from doing what he was doing in Kosovo. Markovic had no power to do that, although he didn't like it and he saw that it was holding Yugoslavia back from western approval, he was simply unable to prevent whatever Milosevic wanted to do in Kosovo. So, there were these two counter trends that were going all through 1989. Most of the people on my staff in the embassy felt that Markovic was going to lose, that he was fighting a losing battle. I didn't disagree with that at all, but I felt that my job, despite the odds, was to promote Markovic and the kinds of things he was trying to do because the alternative- (end of tape)

Q: How did you see the various republics by the time you were there after about six months or so and well into your tour? Was Croatia and Tudjman just sort of on a train that was going to end up in one place, independence and Slovenia. I mean is this something you could do anything about?

ZIMMERMANN: It wasn't apparent in 1989. They hadn't had elections yet in the republics in 1989. That was in 1990. You still had communist leaderships in all of the republics. In some republics they were quite good leaderships. For example, Slovenia had a very progressive communist leadership, arguably the most liberal communist government that ever existed. That doesn't make it all that liberal but it probably is the least illiberal that ever existed, and it was run by a then young man named Milan Kucan who was prepared to risk communist rule in a free election. Which he did a year later and lost. He won the presidency but his party lost control. Kucan was not talking about independence in 1989. He was talking about somehow getting Yugoslavia out of the grip of Milosevic. He saw Milosevic very clearly as the enemy of Yugoslavia's ever getting in to the European organization because of Milosevic's attitude toward Kosovo, because of his dictatorial ways, because of his more retrograde communism. So Kucan was not

talking about independence, but he certainly was talking about a kind of an autonomy for Slovenia that would make it independent of Milosevic's influence. In Croatia the party was quite corrupt, the communist party. They didn't like Milosevic but they were not pushing as Slovenia was toward a western style of democracy. In some of the smaller republics like Montenegro and Macedonia, you had some very good people, young people, in charge who were quite interested in democratizing. So it was a very mixed picture, but Milosevic was terrifying everybody in the approach he was taking. I think many of the leaders in the republics realized that Milosevic really wanted to take over Yugoslavia and run it in Serbia's interest. Of course that horrified them.

Q: Were you getting anything from within Serbia from the people around Milosevic dealing with him? Was anybody trying to convince you that this might be good in the long run?

ZIMMERMANN: The people who were close to Milosevic were a pretty shabby bunch. Milosevic did not tolerate people who disagreed with him. The people around him were yes men. They were people who were just lackeys, usually very undistinguished either politically or intellectually and certainly morally. There were respectable people in Serbia who would say the following. "Well, he is too strong of a nationalist, but you have to understand that Serbia had been discriminated against by Tito. We needed to get our self respect back. He has done that for us, so maybe it isn't too bad." This was a moderate Serbian line. There was some serious opposition to him although it hadn't crystallized in political parties yet because there hadn't been any elections. But there were human rights advocates who despaired of what he was doing in Kosovo. These were Serbs as well as members of other nationalities.

Q: Did you have any relations with his wife?

ZIMMERMANN: I never met his wife. Her name was Mirjana Markovic. She was a childhood sweetheart of his. He was very rarely seeable. I didn't see him at all for nearly a year. Then when I began to see him, I saw him quite frequently but never socially. It was always either because I called on him in his office or a very structured kind of arrangement. I never saw him socially, never laid eyes on his wife. She was never in view to the diplomatic corps except once during the time I was there, she apparently decided she ought to get her story across to some foreign diplomats. She picked the British ambassador, and went and had tea with him for about three hours. He briefed the rest of us after that. It turned out that he was as mystified by her as those of us who hadn't met her were. But I should say about her, the general view of her by Serbs who were not totally whitewashed, brainwashed by Milosevic was that she had a real killer instinct, that she was ruthless and mean and nasty, and if you got on the wrong side of her, you had a one way ticket to oblivion.

Q: It sounds like that wonderful couple to the east, the Ceausescus, in a way.

ZIMMERMANN: Many comparisons were made to the Ceausescus, particularly as time went on and it began to be clear what the Milosevic's were really trying to do.

Q: Was there any developing sort of among the embassies not maybe directions from the home offices about the need to keep Yugoslavia together? I am talking about NATO embassies. Was this pretty well an accepted fact?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. There was a strong view of all of the embassies in 1989 and into 1990 that Yugoslavia should stay together. The argument was not so much whether it should stay together as whether it was in danger of falling apart. We were more alarmist than most of the other embassies about that. The French simply decided that Yugoslavia could not fall apart and therefore they failed to pick up any of the signs that it was falling apart. There was a difference between the German foreign ministry and the German ambassador in Belgrade. Genscher, the German foreign minister as we got into 1990 and 1991, began to favor the breakup of Yugoslavia and the independence of Croatia and Slovenia, whereas his ambassador in Belgrade who was a very wise and intelligent man, saw all the downsides to that and was constantly trying to persuade Bonn that it would be a mistake to favor the breakup of Yugoslavia. That was simply going to create violence which of course, it did.

Q: Well, this is a very important part here. I have heard it said that Genscher's role in this thing was unhelpful. Was there any speculation at the time or since on why Genscher took this particular line?

ZIMMERMANN: There was a lot of speculation, and I am still not sure why he did it. He doesn't even clear it up in his memoirs. He was profoundly moved by the reunification of Germany. He had come from the eastern part of Germany, and he saw this as a remarkable victory for self determination. It really consummated itself with the vote in East Germany to join the Federal Republic. I think he felt out of principle that Croatia should have the same chance to decide its own fate and that Slovenia should. That is the best I can say about Genscher's motivations. There undoubtedly were some political motivations too. He had been heavily criticized in the Bundestag for not being partial enough to Croatia. There were a lot of guest workers from Croatia in Germany and there I have to say this, there is an historic relationship between Croatia and Germany that went back to the Hitler time. Actually it was a Nazi puppet state.

Q: Oh very close. There wasn't talk about there being a staff member, I mean because you get people on our side like Bob Dole who had a staff member who I think was...

ZIMMERMANN: I don't know of one if there was. I haven't heard that before.

Q: I haven't either.

ZIMMERMANN: It is entirely conceivable, but I just don't know.

Q: Well, were you getting anything, Congressional visits or from the upper reaches of the State Department about what to do?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the State Department, I think, understood the situation very well. I mean the government in general, this is the Bush administration, understood very well because it had people higher up in the government who had a lot of experience in Yugoslavia. Larry Eagleburger was the deputy secretary of State. He had been ambassador there. Brent Scowcroft was National Security Advisor, he had been an air attaché in the embassy. So there was no deficit in analysis. I think everybody knew the score, knew what the dangers were. There was a general feeling that Markovic should be supported, and that we should try to hold Yugoslavia together as long as that was a possible option. It stopped being, of course, after awhile. Now Congress had a very different view. Congress in general did not understand the differences between communist Yugoslavia and the other satellites of the Soviet Union when they were communist. The Congressional views tended to lump Yugoslavia with all the others, failing to recognize how different Tito's Yugoslavia had really been and how the Yugoslav communist party had a far better kind of human material in it than the Hungarian party or the Czech party or the Bulgarian party and certainly than the Soviet party. So there was no understanding of that in the Congress. Then when Milosevic started to terrorize the Kosovars in Kosovo, there was a Congressman named Joe Dioguardia, who was from Long Island and who was an Albanian American. He galvanized Congressional sentiment against the Serbian oppression of Kosovo. Congress passed innumerable non binding resolutions about human rights violations in Kosovo. Bob Dole, a very important figure in the Senate then Senate majority leader, was very strongly on the side of Kosovo and of Croatia. You mentioned a staff member. He did have a staff member who was a Croatian American who got his attention and he became a very strong proponent of Tudjman and Croatian independence. That, of course, made Markovic's job practically impossible, because the U.S. Congress didn't have the vaguest idea who Markovic was and what he was trying to do. When Markovic visited the United States in the fall of 1989, there was a disastrous meeting on the hill with a number of Senators and Congressmen in which Markovic was blamed for everything Milosevic was doing despite the fact that he totally disapproved of it and there was nothing he could do about it. Nobody seemed to understand that. There was just very little understanding on the hill of the particular dilemma that this very good man who was trying to create a western style market economy and democracy, the difficulties he was having.

Q: Well, how did the events of November-December '89 in eastern Europe following the fall of Czechoslovakia, I mean the expulsion of the communist parties, did that reverberate strongly where you were?

ZIMMERMANN: I would say not, interestingly enough. Yugoslavs as you know, tend to be extremely narcissistic. Since from 1948 on they carved out a separate path from the other communist countries, they tended to resent being lumped with them in any way. In 1989 when those countries began to be independent, they ignored that too. They probably should have drawn some conclusions from the fact that communism was fast

disappearing from all over eastern Europe, but they didn't draw those conclusions. They certainly should have drawn the conclusion that they had ceased to be geopolitically important to the United States and the west. As long as the Soviet Union was around as a threat, Yugoslavia was a very important piece of real estate. Once the Soviet Union began to slip into its long sleep of inactivity, the importance of Yugoslavia began to diminish. Yugoslavs did not draw the conclusion that they had to move very quickly in the direction that Hungary and Poland and Czechoslovakia were moving if they were going to continue to get the support of the United States. They had been pampered for 40 years. They had been the only communist country that we really favored. Now all of a sudden they were way behind everybody else or almost everybody else. They didn't draw the appropriate conclusion, so I would say the events of the liberation of eastern Europe did not have a very great effect on the Yugoslavs, but they did have a very great effect on western Europe and the United States in diminishing Yugoslavia's importance to the west.

Q: Well, then in 1990, what was happening?

ZIMMERMANN: 1990 was really the hinge year in which the country began to unravel and in which nationalism got extremely violent. 1990 started with the breakup of the Yugoslav communist party. They had a congress of the party in Belgrade in January of 1990. It was clear that Milosevic was trying to get control of the party. The Slovenes walked out. The Congress adjourned sine die and that was the end of it. The Yugoslav communist party never met again. So, that was one central force that had disappeared leaving only one other strong central force which was the army. The army, which had traditionally been more of a Serbian army than of any other nationality, began to move into a more nationalist frame of mind too. Milosevic was very clever about courting the top generals in the army. He and the defense minister, for example, used to take their vacations together. So you had the problem of Yugoslavia having only one powerful central institution, and that one was becoming much more nationalistic and much more pro Serbian. Meanwhile, Markovic grew weaker and weaker. In the spring of 1990, you began to have elections. Elections are good; everybody wants to have elections; elections are how the people express themselves. But in a Yugoslavia which was highly polarized already by the force of Serbian nationalism, the elections all became a kind of a referendum on nationalism. The Slovenes voted for a pro-independence coalition of parties. The Croats voted for the crypto-fascists anti communist, Tudjman, who turned out to be a dictator in the old communist mode but without the ideology of communism. The other republics with the one exception of Macedonia tended to vote for nationalist slates. So, here you have Markovic, who is trying to run the country and instigate an economic reform on a multi-ethnic basis, weakened still further by what was happening in the republics. So things were beginning really to fall apart, and to fall apart in the worst possible way. A way which encouraged violent nationalism in the major republics.

Q: You haven't mentioned, and I can't remember where, Bosnia, Herzegovina. Was that a republic at the time?

ZIMMERMANN: Bosnia Herzegovina was a republic. It was a republic that was created by Tito after the war so it had the same status as Serbia or Croatia or Slovenia. Of course, being a multi ethnic republic, a kind of a mini-Yugoslavia that way, it used what they called the national key. The party and the government were always run by a combination of Serbs, Croats and Muslims. When you had the elections in Bosnia Herzegovina, you had a Muslim candidate who ran on a Muslim ticket. You had a Serbian candidate who ran on a Serbian ticket. The Croatian candidate was the only one who actually had a multi-ethnic approach. So, Bosnia, just like Yugoslavia, was bifurcated or trifurcated into nationalist parties who were scrambling or struggling for control.

Q: Well, at the central government then, did this mean there was a new form of representation?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Well, the parliament was essentially paralyzed. Markovic was very anxious to have parliamentary elections on a Yugoslav-wide basis, because he wanted to get an electoral mandate like the other leaders in the republics. He wanted to be able to say I am a representative of the people as prime minister of Yugoslavia. But most of the power in the Parliament was on republican lines. The republics voted as blocs in the parliament. They blocked that. They prevented Markovic from having federal elections while they were going ahead and having their elections in their republics. So, the immobility of the parliament was another nail in Markovic's coffin.

Q: From your various sources, I am talking about the agency, political attaches, political officers, USIS and all were you seeing increased nationalistic, was that pox getting worse and worse?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh yes, particularly in Serbia and Croatia. In Slovenia, the nationalism was as much a pro-western democratic approach as it was a Slovenia for the Slovenes approach. Croatian and Serbian nationalism were extremely hostile to each other and extremely hostile to anybody who didn't agree with them. The word traitor appeared all the time. If you were a Serb who wasn't a Serb nationalist, you were a traitor to Serbia. You weren't a true Serb. The Croats went through the same thing. This was propagated very heavily by the intellectual class.

Q: You mentioned before the intellectual class has a lot to answer for.

ZIMMERMANN: They had a lot to answer for. The Serbian Academy of Sciences was a hotbed of rabid Serbian nationalism. The same was true in Croatia. Tudjman himself was an historian if you can call it that. He actually did write histories, very contentious biased histories, but he was a so-called intellectual. So, they do have a lot to answer for. Of course, once you get nationalist leaders in power, the press begins to toady to them, or if it doesn't toady to them, it gets taken over, or if it doesn't get taken over, it remains a lonely voice against the trend. People tend to jump on the bandwagon when they see the way things are headed. A lot of people who I thought were moderates in Croatia and Serbia actually turned out in the end to be rabid nationalists. Not because they started out that way, but because that is the way they saw the wind blowing.

Q: I think of particularly receptions or dinner parties when you had a chance to sit down and talk. Did this become more and more the subject of dinner parties at the embassy and all?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. We thought our job was to bring people together, so we would have people to dinner and receptions who might disagree with each other. Already the situation was so bad they would never see each other if they disagreed. We had one dinner party for Katharine Graham, the publisher of the Washington Post who came, I think that was in early 1991. She came with her editorial page editor and with one of the columnists, a very high flying Washington Post group of three or four people. We had a small dinner party. We had the president of Slovenia who flew in for it. We had a major Serbian intellectual and a couple of other people, and the Serb and the Slovene started to attack each other in a way that was so embarrassing to me. I just didn't know what to do. A maid who was serving the table was in tears about it. Of course I am not sure how Mrs. Graham took it. It was quite interesting certainly for her. It was illuminating about what the true situation was. But these were two people who both had extensive experience in the West, had been professors in western universities. The nicest people that we knew, and they were going at it hammer and tongs, very insulting to each other.

Q: Was there a feeling, I mean on your part in the embassy and maybe on other parts of the diplomatic corps of almost hopelessness watching these trains all three or four heading for the same point to collide?

ZIMMERMANN: I suppose we should have been hopeless, but since we could not imagine a scenario, and we played these games out a lot, we could not imagine a scenario in which the breakup of Yugoslavia could happen in any way other than violence. We kept trying to find solutions right up until the very week it broke up which was the week that the Secretary of State visited Belgrade. James Baker came to Belgrade a week before the Slovenes and Croats declared their independence. His message, which we strongly encouraged, was please don't do it, or if you are going to do it, please wait until there is a possibility of working out what sort of relationship these different parts of Yugoslavia would have with each other. The problem as we saw it was that war would come if they precipitated it. That's what happened. Baker's mission was a failure. It probably came much too late to have any chance of success. If we were able to handle two major crises at the same time, Baker could have come earlier, but he had the Gulf War on his hands, and was focusing fully on that. If he'd come six months before, Yugoslavia might have been able to do something.

Q: Do you really think so or I mean was Milosevic and Tudjman so I mean they both had their own agenda which envisaged a certain hunk of the other person's territory.

ZIMMERMANN: I suppose if you put the question, I have to say that there is nothing the west and or the United States could have done to hold Yugoslavia together. The nationalism had gone so far and had become so poisonous that there probably was

nothing any outside agents could have done to prevent the breakup. The next question is, while if it was going to break up, is there anything we could have done to assure that the breakup was non violent. Frankly I don't think so.

Q: Well, before Baker came out, were any of the other European countries doing the equivalent of sending missions there or coming up with initiatives?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, the European Community was enormously active. Luxembourg had the presidency, too bad in a way because it is a small country without too much influence, but they came out to Yugoslavia. They offered the squabbling republics enormous amounts of economic assistance and cash and whatnot to compose their differences and try to work out an economic plan for an economic reform. Markovic strongly encouraged this. It was clearly the rational thing to do. The community was doing the right thing. Guess what, nobody listened. That was when I realized that it's sometimes just as fruitless to appeal to somebody's rationality as it is to appeal to their irrationality. The rational choice was not to go in a direction which ended up causing three wars, a fourth if you count Kosovo, hundreds of thousands of casualties, a country decimated, going from one of the most promising economies in Europe to one of the most hopeless. Nobody could choose that rationally, and yet that is what they chose.

Q: Was there sort of a cadre of rational people whom you saw talking and working and all, or was this getting harder and harder to find?

ZIMMERMANN: No there were plenty of them. Most of them, I have to say were communists. They were Tito-style communists who understood perhaps better than most, the dangers of nationalism. Tito was a dictator, but at least he was a dictator who did his best to suppress nationalism in Yugoslavia. He understood the dangers of it because he had been through WWII which was a civil war in Yugoslavia. These people, many of them were human rights advocates. A lot of them are now in New York or Paris or London, not in Yugoslavia any more because there is nothing left for them there. They did not constitute a critical mass. They were not important enough in mass to turn things around. And Milosevic despised them and Tudjman despised them. They were just not accepted by the nationalist groups.

Q: Was Bosnia considered a particular problem at the time, or was that something that developed later on?

ZIMMERMANN: Bosnia came on the radar screen as a problem when it became possible that Croatia would declare independence, because there is a Croatian population in Bosnia, and there is a Serbian population in Bosnia. Croatia's independence was a vital issue for Croats and for Serbs. The president of Bosnia Izetbegovic won the presidency on a very strong Muslim religious ticket. He had not run for election as a fan of multi-ethnic society. He had run as a Muslim. But when he got into power, that is not the right word for Bosnia, when he got into office - he certainly had no power - he understood that if he was going to hold Bosnia together, he had to reach out to the other communities, the Croat and Serb communities, and he had to try to make liaisons with other people in

Yugoslavia who cared about holding the country together. He made a very close alliance with the leader of Macedonia, Kiro Gligorav who was a wonderful old liberal communist figure, and was the president of Macedonia. Izetbegovic said early on, "If Croatia becomes independent, Bosnia will be destroyed." He said that to Baker when Baker came to Belgrade. It was a very dramatic moment. Of course that is exactly what happened. There probably were ways to save Bosnia. I don't see the same inevitability about the war in Bosnia that I do about the breakup of Yugoslavia. There, I think the west might have had a role. First of all, when the Yugoslav army started committing very violent acts against civilian populations in Croatia, particularly destroying the city of Vukovar and shelling Dubrovnik, this wonderful medieval town, the west did not react. NATO did not take any action. I think in retrospect, and I hadn't recommended this at the time, if NATO had done that, the Serbs might have shelved their strategy for Bosnia which was to incrementally declare independent Serbian areas in Bosnia supported by the Yugoslav army, and then ultimately just take over 2/3 of the country. That was clearly, as we look back on it now, what the Serbs and the Yugoslav army intended to do. I think if NATO had shown some muscle, this would have been in the summer and fall of 1991, they might not have gone ahead and implemented that plan. The Bosnian war started in April of 1992. Izetbegovic by the late summer of '91, was getting almost hysterical about what might happen in Bosnia. He was asking for UN peace keepers to come in in a preventive mode, and he was turned down flat on that. Then he switched himself from saying Yugoslavia had to hold together, he began to say, well, maybe Bosnia should be independent, hoping that the west would defend Bosnia, which it didn't do.

Q: Did you see any hope of getting any response from, or was there any hope of getting a response from NATO or something?

ZIMMERMANN: It wasn't even on the radar screen. There was some effort by the French to react to the bombing of Dubrovnik, but there wasn't a single American politician that I know of, - not even Senator Dole who was a very strong advocate of Croatia and Croatian independence - who was arguing that American forces should be engaged. I think we could have done some things with air power. Certainly we could have gotten rid of the artillery in the hills over Dubrovnik very easily I believe. These issues all came back again in the Bosnian war when the Serbs began to exterminate people, Muslim villages along the border of Serbia and Bosnia, along the Drina River. The first two or three months of that war was the bloodiest time. This was all undoubtedly a plan. It wasn't all mistakes or people out of control, they were sanctioned to kill. I think, and by then I was an activist on this, that the use of air power by NATO would have stopped the Serbs from doing what they were doing and pushed them into a negotiation which would have ended up in a much better situation for Bosnia than the Dayton agreement three years later could produce.

Q: You were there until when?

ZIMMERMANN: Until May of '92. I was withdrawn with the other NATO ambassadors by our governments as a sign of protest against what the Serbs were doing in Bosnia.

Q: During the sort of first phase of this, Slovenian independence, I take it this was not considered vital to anything was it or not?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, if Slovenia had declared its independence, and there hadn't been any other declarations of independence, then I think that you could argue that Slovenia could have become a small western European country, and the rest of Yugoslavia might have held together. The problem was that Tadjman very quickly said that if Slovenia declares independence, Croatia will declare independence. I think you can understand why he said that. He said that because with Slovenia gone out of Yugoslavia, Croatia is then exposed to the power of Serbia. Slovenia had no military power, but it had a lot of moral force and political power within Yugoslavia and economic power. With Slovenia gone, Croatia is naked to the sword of Milosevic. So Tadjman in fact gave the Slovenes a blank check. He said if they go, we go too, and that's what happened. They went within one day of each other.

Q: Well now, when you were there, when did you start seeing Milosevic?

ZIMMERMANN: I saw him for the first time in January of 1990. I had been in the country since March of '89, so it was ten months.

Q: How did that go?

ZIMMERMANN: It was a rather cold meeting. It lasted two hours. He impressed me as somebody who is very intelligent, who had on the surface at least, very good arguments for what he was doing. He is a lawyer, and he always produced a kind of a rational approach for everything he was doing. A very intelligent man. His use of facts was unbelievable. It sounded very convincing if you didn't know the facts. If you did know the facts, it was absolutely off the wall. He was talking about the number of rapes that had been perpetrated on Serbian women by Albanians. In fact we happen to know the statistics on rape in Yugoslavia. Kosovo had one of the lowest rape figures per capita in Yugoslavia of the different regions in Yugoslavia. So I would say it was a cold meeting. We had a very full exchange. I was certainly able to say everything I had been instructed to say. He was prepared to see me again and again and again after that. I never had any trouble getting in again.

Q: But in a way you are really talking about we no longer were sort of the bulwark for Yugoslavia against the Soviet Union. Not only was it not important to us, we weren't important to them I take it in a way.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, we certainly weren't important to Milosevic. He didn't really care what the United States did or said, and he wasn't going to react on the basis of whether we held out the hand of friendship or the mailed fist. Either he was very smart about that or he was intensely stupid because in the end he paid, at least in economic terms. I am sure he will pay the ultimate price in the end for it, but it is true. He didn't care what the west thought. Now, Tadjman did care. Tadjman was different in that sense. He wanted to

be considered a western statesman, and so what the Germans thought, what the French thought, what the Americans thought was important to Tudjman. Not to Milosevic.

Q: While you were there did they go through, what happened to Markovic?

ZIMMERMANN: Markovic just dwindled away. During 1991 you got the Croatian and Slovenian declarations of independence. Markovic tried very hard to block that. He even tried to sic the army on the Slovenes. He was a party to the army's attack on Slovenia. He lost power when the European Community came back into the picture in the summer of 1991 trying to broker arrangements between the different republics so as to forestall violence, and then ultimately setting up a big commission under Lord Carrington, former British foreign minister, to try to get the different republics to define their relations with each other, so that if they were going to be recognized as independent, there would be in place a series of guarantees against violence. That was the whole point of what Carrington was trying to do. Carrington didn't even deal with Markovic in that situation. He would deal with the heads of the republics. He would deal with the major parties like Karadzic, who was the head of the Bosnian Serb party. Markovic didn't even have a role. That was a very big mistake I think by Carrington. I think Cyrus Vance also made a mistake in ignoring Markovic. We should've been doing the best we could to prop up Markovic as a figure for reform and democracy whereas we just cast him aside and dealt with the nationalists. He ultimately resigned, I think, in December of '91, a failed figure, a Yugoslav Kerensky.

Q: Very sad. Tudjman, you say he was paying attention or at least got to be perceived as a positive figure, did you deal with him at all?

ZIMMERMANN: A lot, yes, because when it was a country, I was accredited to the whole country. I went a lot to Croatia and Slovenia because they were such key players in everything that was going on. Even after Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, I was received as if nothing had happened. I had a little trepidation about that because they were now independent. I was not, according to them, the American ambassador any more, but they received me as if nothing had happened. Tudjman would give a lunch for me. I had access to everybody including the leaders. So, it was a very weird Alice in Wonderland kind of situation, but we went on having conversations. All during the war, the Croats had with the Yugoslav army, I went several times to Croatia, had meetings with Tudjman. He seemed to have it in his mind, I think he got this from Croatian émigrés in the United States, that the United States was going to intervene militarily on the side of Croatia against the Yugoslav army. I exerted a lot of energy to try to persuade him that wasn't true. It wasn't going to happen; he shouldn't count on it. But he seemed to believe it nevertheless.

Q: Well, when the fighting broke out, particularly the fighting over when the Serbian army moved into a solid hunk of what could be called Croatia.

ZIMMERMANN: They took about a third, between a quarter and a third of Croatia. These were the border areas where the largest number of Serbs lived. They weren't a majority in those areas by any means, but they were highly concentrated there. Those were the areas the army took and consolidated its hold on. So you ended up with Tudjman having lost a quarter to a third of his country. Cyrus Vance was appointed by the Secretary General of the UN to try to broker a peace between the Yugoslav army and Croatia. Vance achieved that. The deal was that the Yugoslav army would pull out of Croatia entirely and the areas that it had taken over would be policed by the UN peacekeeping force. The part of Croatia would be policed by the UN peacekeeping force not by the Croatian army or by the Croatian police. Tudjman accepted that very reluctantly, and I think if he had not wanted to be in good odor with the west, he wouldn't have accepted it because he saw it for what it was which was effectively a Serbian takeover of those areas. The UN was not very effective there. The Serbs had plenty of arms and had effective control. So every six months this arrangement would come up for renewal, and every six months Tudjman would threaten to walk away from it, and every six months he would agree to it. A lot of arm twisting went on by the Germans to get him to agree to it. So you see the dynamic between the west and Tudjman. Finally he took advantage of the Bosnian war in 1995 to send his army through all these areas. They beat up the Serbs very badly, drove them out, killed many, and took these areas back by force.

Q: What were the dynamics we were seeing in the Serbian army?

ZIMMERMANN: It was an historic army. It had won the partisan war against the Germans, so it had emerged a kind of a hero army. A very communist army like the Soviet red army, a highly politicized army. Generals sat on the central committee of the Yugoslav party. But it was also an army that took pride in being multi ethnic. There were Generals and admirals who came from all of the republics right up until the end and even sometimes after the end. Now most of the generals were Serbs. I don't think there is a nefarious reason for that. I think it is partly because Serbia has a long military tradition.

Q: Like most of our people from the south in our military.

ZIMMERMANN: Exactly. It is an honorable profession to be in the military. That was true in Serbia; it was not true in Slovenia. Slovenes did not consider the army a very honorable profession, although the number three ranking person in the Yugoslav army that attacked Croatia was a Slovene. He was an admiral, stayed on. So, you had this army which was predominately Serbian, but by no means exclusively Serbian. It had high ranking people who were from other republics. For awhile it stayed aloof from the nationalism, but it began to get engaged particularly when the Slovenes and the Croats started talking about breaking away from Yugoslavia, because the army saw that as a bottom line. Their job was to defend the integrity and the borders of Yugoslavia. Here Croatia and Slovenia were threatening to change those borders and to destroy that integrity. Then the army got very nasty. It tried to break up the local national guards that were forming in Croatia and Slovenia. There was a dramatic showdown in the Yugoslav presidency in March, I think was the month, of 1991 in which the defense minister told

the presidency that he needed the authority to go in and beat up the Croatian and Slovenia irregular forces that were forming. He couldn't get a majority on the presidency for it because the Bosnian representative happened to be a Serb, but he wouldn't go along with it. He paid a big price for that afterwards from Milosevic and his people. This was only three months before the ultimate breakup of Yugoslavia. The army was moving towards a pro-Milosevic line. Even in June of July of 1991 when the country broke up, I don't think Milosevic was giving the defense minister orders. I don't think it worked that way, but I think there was a kind of unity of view there. Of course once Croatia and headed toward independence, many of the Croats and Slovenes in the army and particularly in the high officer levels of the army defected and went back to their republics and started to form their own national armies. That is what happened. With the chief of the Yugoslav air force. I had been so impressed with him that when he was on a trip to the United States, we arranged a meeting between him and Scowcroft in Washington. He came back, and three or four weeks after that meeting he defected to Croatia and became the commander in chief of the Croatian army which consisted of nobody at that point. So what you had was a Yugoslav army which in a way become a totally Serbian army because the Slovenes wouldn't send any draftees to the army. Their officers were moving back to their republics. The same was happening with the Croats. The Macedonians were too small to be a major factor. The Montenegrins were mainly Serbs anyway so they were on the Serbian side. You ended up having what you could really call a Serbian army, not because it wanted to be a Serbian army, but because it couldn't get anybody from the other republics.

Q: Well then, please correct me if I am wrong, but in the Croatian-Serbian war, it really doesn't sound like the Serbian army was one that wanted to get in down and dirty, although it did dirty stuff. I mean it seemed to be one that would sit back and use a hell of a lot of artillery to take care of things which shows a basic ineffectiveness.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, there were a number of interesting things. The first interesting thing was the amount of draft dodging and desertions that there were when fighting actually started in July of 1991. People were hiding out, swimming rivers, running across the border. I don't think anyone has ever accumulated the statistics on how many there were, but there were a whole lot of Serbs who simply didn't want to fight. That was number one. Number two was the phenomenon you are talking about that the army wouldn't take any risks. They would sit and pummel these cities with artillery until there wasn't a house left intact, and then they would go in and clean up. The third thing that I think is relevant. This is particularly relevant in the Bosnian war, but it was true in Croatia as well. The dirty work, I mean the killing and the throat slitting and assassinations would be done by irregulars. They were done by guys who if they weren't just out of jail, should've been in jail.

Q: Arkan and so on.

ZIMMERMANN: People like that who were real professional killers and thugs. They would go in and commit murders in these towns and then the army would come in and secure their control of the towns. So the army would not get its hands too dirty although it

began to, and there were some pretty horrendous atrocities committed by the military in Croatia and Bosnia. But that's right. There was a kind of a feeling that you couldn't trust the army to take real risks because they weren't fighting the Germans for their existence any more. They were fighting their own countrymen.

Q: Was the same animosity shown between Serbs and Croats as between Serbs and Muslims? You know, you look at two different wars.

ZIMMERMANN: Probably not quite. There probably would have been the same animosity if the Croatian war had gone on as long as the Bosnian war. Bosnia was a bolder conception if I can use that euphemism for the Serbs. The Serbs wanted to take over 2/3 of Bosnia. They had absolutely no claim to it at all. They couldn't even invent a claim to it. That would require a lot of killing of Muslims. They decided they were prepared to do that. In Croatia, their aims were far more restricted. They simply wanted to carve off the piece of land where most of the Serbs in Croatia lived. There were plenty of atrocities in Croatia, but they don't add up to the numbers that you saw in Bosnia.

Q: Well, you were there basically during the Croatian-Serbian war.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes.

Q: How about the reporting because later I mean it became quite something particularly when it moved to Bosnia, but the ethnic cleansing and all that. What about the reporting of what was going on?

ZIMMERMANN: You mean by the press?

Q: No, by the embassy and by the consulate general, too.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, well, I would say the first month of the Croatian, Serb-Croat war was a bit ambiguous because, after all the Croats had declared their independence which was to the army an illegal act. The army claimed during the first month that it was simply trying to restore order. Then it became clear that this pattern I just talked about, that the Serb toughs would go in and shoot up the Croatian village and then the army would come in and "restore order" but somehow the village would be left in the hands of the Serbs, not the Croats who used to live there. So it became clear say by August that the aggressors were the Serbs, were the Yugoslav army. There was a group of observers from the European Community who were there, whose role was ridiculed I think quite unfairly. They were unarmed. They wore white uniforms which made people call them Good Humor men. But they were there to make sure that atrocities did not go unreported. They were quite useful in doing that. The Dutch had the presidency of the community at the time, and they unleashed one particular Dutch diplomat who kept trying to negotiate cease fires in different parts of Croatia and who took a lot of risks. He was shot at many times in order to do that. So there were attempts to quiet things down. Vance came in September with a mandate from the UN to try to get a cease fire. He took a very even handed approach. He did not feel that the Serbs were the only aggressors. He felt that

Tudjman had a lot to answer for as well. Vance had been a deputy secretary of defense for the United States. He had a lot of pride in the military virtues, and he saw what the Croats were doing to the Yugoslav army. For example, blockading them in their barracks so they couldn't get out, and sending in dog food when they said they were hungry, and taunting their wives who were often Croatian women. Many of the Serb officers in Croatia had been there a long time and had Croatian wives. It was pretty bad on both sides, and Vance got a lot of respect in Serbia with Milosevic for being even-handed about it. I think at the end of the day, there is no doubt that real aggressor was the Yugoslav army, but it wasn't all that apparent at the beginning.

Q: Well, we are sort of skipping back and forth. When Baker came, when did he come?

ZIMMERMANN: He came in June of 1991 just before the Croats and Slovenes declared independence. In other words it was just before the war in and then the war in Croatia.

Q: What was the purpose of his visit?

ZIMMERMANN: There were two purposes really, to try to get the Croats and Slovenes to delay their declarations of independence until some sort of a relationship could be worked out among the different republics to prevent violence, and also to put a lot of pressure on Milosevic to stop trying to wreck the institutions of Yugoslavia. At that time he was trying to prevent a Croat from becoming the president of Yugoslavia. It was Croatia's turn and he was stopping him from taking over. So, he was paralyzing the institutions. This is the man who kept claiming he was the savior of Yugoslavia and he was loyal to Yugoslavia. He was really intent on destroying it, and he was to my mind the main destroyer.

Q: Well now, when Baker came out, how did his party, were they ready for what they found?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I think Baker knew at the time he came that the odds were long against his success. Interestingly enough, he was traveling with some American press, because he was going to other countries. He had been in other countries and was going on. They were taunting him. They would yell at him, "Too late, too late." In other words, if he had come earlier he might have done something but he didn't have a chance this time. Baker did what I considered a brilliant job starting early in the morning and going until late at night, seeing one republican leader after another plus Markovic plus the foreign minister, Loncar. I thought he handled himself brilliantly. He did the best he could with a very bad hand of cards, and he failed. As he was leaving, the American press yelled at him, "Too late, too late."

Q: I mean it doesn't seem like the press, I mean was there any other plan? You know, it is all very nice to say do something but you have to figure out what to do.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Baker was trying to buy time for negotiation. I think the most he would have done is bought time. I don't think he would have staved off anything. If he had come six months or a year earlier with a real plan of economic support that could've been made very visible to the Yugoslav public, it might have been possible to do something. I think the passions were too great to do it. There are some situations that outside influence can not affect. I think that this was one of them.

Q: We tend sometimes to absorb the sins of others on ourselves. Was there a gradual, I mean were we seeing a gradual accumulation of more and more power by Milosevic in Serbia?

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, yes. It was as close to totalitarian as you could probably get in the Balkans. There were a couple of independent television and radio stations and some newspapers and magazines, but he could have closed those down too, but I think he rather enjoyed keeping them open so he could say they had a free press. He could point to all of these media that attacked him. Nobody attacked him all that vociferously though, because they knew what the price for that would be. But he took over a communist apparatus which had never been dismantled, and communist apparatuses not only run the government, they run the business community, they run the economic sector, they run the culture, and they run the press. He had all of that.

Q: It is there today, too.

ZIMMERMANN: It is still there today, sure.

Q: What about there was talk that we, referring to the west, recognized Croatia and Serbia as being independent until you all sit down and work this out and all. Then Germany recognized Croatia. And then the Pope shortly thereafter. I would feel that would feed the paranoia of the Serbs.

ZIMMERMANN: Oh, sure, it certainly did do that. Lord Carrington was sent out there to try to get the republics to basically form a non aggression pact toward each other. He is a good negotiator. The only card he had was recognition. He said, "We won't recognize you until you guarantee that you will adhere to peaceful practices. Then because of German pressure, the European Community does recognize Croatia and offers recognition to Bosnia and Macedonia. So Carrington's only card has been taken away by the people who sent him out there. He was furious; you can imagine how furious he would have been. And he ultimately resigned because he felt he couldn't do anything. I don't think there would have been much he could have done anyway. What they did to him was unconscionable.

Q: I would have thought, I mean how did you find personally dealing with this, particularly the last year or so? I mean was it, you wrote a book called The Origins of a Catastrophe. Was there any hope in what you were doing? How did you feel?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I had to separate the analytical side from the policy side. Analytically if you asked me if I were a professor, I would have said this isn't going to work. It is going to fall apart and there is going to be war. But, my job was not just to be an analyst; it was to do what could be done, and Washington was very strongly on the side of this to try to hold it together at least until it was possible to work something out to prevent a war. So you couldn't let yourself accept a counsel of despair. The analysis would have led to despair, and you couldn't let yourself do that. You had to keep trying to produce something which turned out just not to be there.

Q: Well, were you getting from a segment of the Yugoslavs particularly the Serbs because you were located there but also sort of why didn't you do more type of thing or what's the United States going to do about this, or were the Serbs, even the people that would be closer to us, were they caught up in the...

ZIMMERMANN: We were cordially criticized and disliked by all the protagonists. The nationalist Serbs argued that we were not really for the preservation of Yugoslavia. We wanted to break it up because we weren't supporting the army in its efforts to put down the Slovene-Croatian uprisings. The Slovenes blamed us because we were trying to hold Yugoslavia together, meaning in their view that Milosevic was going to run things. The Croats had the same view that we were doing Milosevic's business by trying to hold Yugoslavia together. The only people that supported us were the anti-Milosevic opposition in Serbia, the independent press in Serbia, some moderate Croats who didn't like Tudjman, most of the liberal Slovene communist party, all of the moderates in Bosnia from Serb, Muslim and Croatian sides. All the Kosovar Albanians liked us because they knew we really were opposed to Milosevic on the Kosovo issue. The Macedonians liked us because we were trying to hold Yugoslavia together somehow.

Q: Well, did you have the feeling that the American press when it did report on this, the accusation was the United States, i.e., its old Yugoslav hands were trying too hard to hold Yugoslavia together when we should have tried for a more peaceful separation.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, that is the argument. The weakness of the argument was to me, that I didn't think there was any way that a separation could have been peaceful.

Q: There were too many overlapping things.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right, too many overlapping things, too many hostilities that had been stoked up by these nationalist leaders, too many guns around, too many tanks around. I certainly don't argue that we should have held the country together so it could be run by Milosevic. Maybe there was no solution to that. That's why we pushed so hard for Markovic. He represented an alternative to a Yugoslavia run by Milosevic. But the problem was Tito of all people should have understood that if you want to get rid of nationalism, you have to have the possibility of a strong central government.

Q: And he didn't provide for that.

ZIMMERMANN: He provided for the reverse. He created a constitution that was unworkable from the center, that meant that no leader could emerge from the center and run the country.

Q: How did you find reporting in the western press during this period?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, the western press ignored Yugoslavia for a long time. I remember talking to a New York Times correspondent in 1989 who came through. There were no resident American correspondents in Yugoslavia when I arrived. Not a single one. Dusko Doder came later, but he wasn't working for an American paper then. He had worked for the Washington Post, but he was working for a European. Laura Silber who was an excellent American correspondent was working for the Financial Times. There was no American paper represented. The New York Times person came through once and he said, "You know, it is very hard for me to report on Yugoslavia because it is so complicated that you have to explain so much in the first paragraph that the reader is turned off immediately out of boredom." So it took them a long time to pick up I think. Once they picked up, then they were pretty good.

Q: Well, were you beginning, you left there when in '92?

ZIMMERMANN: In May of '92.

Q: Now what had happened in Bosnia when you left?

ZIMMERMANN: The war had been going on for about six weeks. There had been the immediate invasion across the Serbian border of the irregulars, paramilitaries, and they had shot up a lot of Bosnian towns and killed and imprisoned a lot of Muslims. The Bosnian Serb army had emerged, this was one of the great con jobs of military history. Officers and men of the Yugoslav army who came from Bosnia were all transferred back into Bosnia as members of the Yugoslav army. Then at a given time they all became the Bosnian Serb army all of a sudden. They were all from the Yugoslav army including their commander, the nefarious General Mladic who was a colonel in the Yugoslav army. So, the Serbs had an army of trained people with arms and equipment amounting to about 65,000 people, which is a good sized European army. Whereas the Muslims started with nobody.

Q: At a certain point were you changing the focus of your attention between the Croats and the Serbs and getting over to Bosnia?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, by the fall of '91 Bosnia became I guess, really our major subject at issue.

Q: What was your impression of Izetbegovic

ZIMMERMANN: A weak man, not a bad man, too manipulated by stronger people and more radical people, somebody who was trying to do the right thing in terms of creating a sense of tolerance among the three faiths and races, ethnic groups in Bosnia. Not quite up to the job I would say, but certainly not the demon figure that the Serbs made out of him.

Q: Did you see any hope; was there any hope, or was this part of a longer plan of Milosevic that Bosnia was going to be taken over more or less?

ZIMMERMANN: The Serbian plan for Bosnia began to be visible in April of '91. Unfortunately we didn't see it in all of its implications then. It was to have the Bosnian Serbs pick fights with the Muslim leadership, declare different pieces of Bosnia autonomous. The army would come in to "protect the population there" but would effectively guarantee the autonomy of these pieces. They would become ink spots all over Bosnia, areas which did not recognize the government of Bosnia's control. Then to pull people out of the Bosnian assembly and the Bosnian government because they were Serbs. Of course by the national key there were Serbs in the assembly and the government. To pull those out thereby again weakening and challenging the control of the government. Then to have the military come in, the Yugoslav army which of course had a right to be in Bosnia because it was a part of Yugoslavia, to arm the local Serbian population and to deny arms to the Muslims, and then to ultimately to declare an independent Bosnian Serb republic in Bosnia. Then to spread the territory that republic controlled up to 64% was the number you usually heard, so 2/3 of the territory of Bosnia. This for a population that was only about 1/3 the population of Bosnia. They explained that by saying that Muslims live in cities, so they can have cities except Sarajevo. They can't have that, but they can have most of the other cities. Since Serbs are farmers they get the land. So it was all very logical, and anywhere Serbs are buried is of course Serbian territory, so that is a new principle as well. This was all worked out with the Yugoslav army. All through the Bosnian war, the Bosnian Serb army was paid from the Yugoslav army and equipped. There wasn't even much of a secret about it. That was the plan.

Q: Did you ever talk to Karadzic?

ZIMMERMANN: Karadzic, I talked to him a lot, yes.

Q: How did he strike you?

ZIMMERMANN: I think quite mad. I think he was quite mad, a raving nationalist. Soft spoken so you don't get the full effect of it until you actually listen to what he is telling you, which is that Muslims are iniquitous, they always lie and cheat and steal. You Americans don't understand them because you haven't lived in the Balkans and I have, but that is the way they are. The only way to deal with them is to oppress them. It is the only way. A southern racist from 1850 would have sounded smoother than that.

Q: Warren, how did you leave? Were you pulled out when all our ambassadors were pulled out? Was that it?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. Well, the Bosnian war began in early April of '92, and it became immediately clear that Milosevic was pulling the strings on this. So I was sent in to see him several times in the next couple of weeks to remonstrate with him and to complain about the aggression that he was launching against the Muslims. Of course he would shrug it all off. He would say, "I don't have anything to do with Bosnia. I am the president of Serbia. You know that. Bosnia is not my problem. If you want to talk about Bosnia, go to the Bosnians, not to me." Finally my instructions got stronger and stronger, and he had a harder and harder time denying that he had anything to do with it. But it was very clear both in the press reporting and the views of Washington of the government, Milosevic was guilty, the prime malefactor in Bosnia. So our quarrel was more with him than with anybody else. Finally because nobody could think of anything else to do, the decision was made, we don't want to do business with these characters. So NATO took a decision, on U.S. initiative to withdraw the ambassadors. Leave the embassies under charges. Embassies never disappear, they keep going right through everything, and the ambassadors left. I had a very surreal experience the night before I left. Since we were pulled out in a hurry, we had quite a lot of food in the freezer and alcohol and stuff around so we thought why not have a farewell party on short notice for the people we really like, the people who stood for the kinds of things the west stood for. So we got the word out. Of the people we invited everybody came. There wasn't a single person who didn't come. Sixty-five people came, a former foreign minister who resigned because he couldn't stand Milosevic, members of the Serbian opposition. We didn't have time to get people from Croatia. These were all people from Belgrade. Vuk Draskovic, one of the opposition leaders, the other opposition leaders were all there, courageous journalists, human rights people, just friends. There were confessions. People would talk to us and tell us their innermost thoughts. This was the other Yugoslav, in the western, democratic Yugoslavia. You asked a minute ago if anybody was for the U.S. These people were, and they were and are wonderful people because they weren't taken in by the nationalist rhetoric that you heard all around. Draskovic who had a reputation as an opportunist came up to me and said, "I just want to promise you, I have real conviction of loyalty to western values and market economy." He was a bout 80% right I guess in what happened. Midway through the party, Arkan sent his men up disrupt the party. Arkan actually had his ice cream store just three or four blocks away from my residence. We knew it was Arkan because my very alert Serbian driver noticed his jeep. He knew what his jeep was and he saw it. These guys came up in jeeps and they started to spray toxic poison what do you call it, for getting rid of bugs.

Q: Fumigating.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, all around the garden. It was a nice night and we were having the party outside. They were trying to drive the guests away. My driver took them on for which he got a full shot of this toxic stuff in the eyes. But they did go away. We didn't know what to tell the guests until one of them came up to us and said, "We noticed you are spraying in the garden. How did you manage to find that really good spray? We have been looking for it for a very long time." So they didn't know that Arkan had made a

failed attempt to disrupt our party. That was the night before I left. The morning I left, I got my final instruction to go in to complain to Milosevic, if I could find him, but he wasn't available. He was never available on weekends, so I talked to his foreign minister. Another demarche railing at them for what they were doing in Bosnia. I spent literally up until the time I had to leave for the airport to leave the country telling this guy how strongly we objected to what they were doing. Very smoothly, he was a former diplomat, a former Yugoslav diplomat, he was coming back at me with all the defenses that they used. Finally I got exasperated and I said, "I have to go, but I just have to ask you one question, which is how does an intelligent man like you who has been a diplomat and seen the world and been in the west and by the way has a Croatian wife, how can you believe this bullshit that you are telling me?" He told me he believed it. Then I left.

Q: Well, I think for many of us who knew Yugoslavia, you could understand what happened in the '30s in Germany better. I mean, you know, you kind of wonder how could the Germans have done that, but then you watch it being repeated.

ZIMMERMANN: Yes. If you are just a common person, a normal person, it is easier to go with the people in power. Your job isn't going to be threatened. You are not going to be called a traitor. You are not going to get in trouble, just easier to go along. And if you are going to go along, that is the first step. The second step might be get a little enthusiastic about it because these demagogues give you wonderful arguments. They sound very persuasive. They show you television footage of Croats massacring Serbian youths and the same footage of course, exactly the same footage is found in Croatia with the names changed.

Q: I am told there was even some that came out of WWI got reused again and again. When you came back what sort of a... What did they do with you? What were you up to?

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I came back and I immediately started to work as the head of the refugee bureau. I was back in the Bosnia picture again because we were beginning to have a lot of refugee problems. But I debriefed. I talked to a lot of people including Baker and Scowcroft and Eagleburger. Being out, I began to think, and that's when I began to lobby rather hard for air strikes. I hadn't come out for air strikes while I was in Belgrade. When I got out and began to put things together a little bit, I began to realize what we really needed to do was to take out the Serbian installations over the hills in Sarajevo for example, the communications lines and so forth, and I was convinced then as I still am, that had we done that, it would have been relatively cost free, and we would have driven the Serbs to the negotiating table where they would have settled for a lot less than they settled for today. We would have saved 100,000 lives.

Q: Well, what happened?

ZIMMERMANN: I had a long talk with Scowcroft. Eagleburger was strongly against the use of force for Vietnam reasons. People who had experience in Vietnam simply didn't want to go down that road again and he felt this was going down that road again. Scowcroft, of course, had been in Vietnam as had Colin Powell. I had the feeling that

Scowcroft was listening to me more than the others were. He kept me longer in the office than he should have. We looked at scenarios, where would you bomb, how would you do this and so forth. I had the feeling that maybe he was thinking about it. But I think in retrospect it wasn't going to happen. It was an election year. Bush was running. He didn't want to get mired down. I think he himself was hard over against the use of American military anyway. Then I took a month vacation. I came back in the fall. I went quite often with Eagleburger to deputies committee meetings where policy was being thrashed out. It was very clear by the way those meetings were being run by the national Security Council, that we weren't going to do a thing. The Pentagon and the Joint Chiefs and the office of the Secretary of Defense representative would come in absolutely hard against any use of American soldiers. If you were a uniformed American soldier, you had to get permission from the Secretary of Defense even to go to Bosnia. Every initiative that was proposed for humanitarian relief that involved the U.S. military was opposed by the Pentagon. Opening a road from the coast to go to Sarajevo, nixed by the Pentagon. Using air force planes to beam television images so people could get a more objective view, killed by the Pentagon. No fly zones, killed by the Pentagon. Air drops of relief of places you couldn't get to by road, killed by the Pentagon. Ultimately many of these things were done very successfully but over the dead body of the military.

Q: Was it the Vietnam sort of a Weinberger doctrine?

ZIMMERMANN: The word Vietnam, you never heard it, not in those meetings anyway, but it was definitely Weinberger Powell doctrine. You don't engage militarily unless you have absolutely a 100% chance of success. Unless you have an exit strategy whatever that means or unless you have assurance that there would be no casualties or very few. We would never have gone into the Gulf War if we had applied those rules because they were expecting a lot of casualties in the Gulf War. Our casualties were much less in the Gulf War than were expected, and Bush had the courage then to go in and do it, do what had to be done. But he didn't have it in Bosnia.

Q: Well, then you moved into the refugee side for awhile didn't you?

ZIMMERMANN: Yes, I did that for two years.

Q: What was that like?

ZIMMERMANN: It was actually enormously inspirational. I had no experience with refugees. By the way it is a bureau in the State Department that is unique because people actually give up foreign service assignments in order to continue to work there. They get so taken up with the mission of it. There are many former foreign service officers who are there who gave up their commissions in the foreign service to stay there. I asked my staff, I said, "I would like to see the worst refugee situation you can find. I would like to go out and look at that." They said, "The worst is in Kenya because that is where all the refugees from Uganda and Somalia and Ethiopia go. So go up to northern Kenya and you will see." So I spent some time up there. I thought it would be depressing, but of course it was

exactly the reverse. If people can get as far as a refugee camp, they are probably going to be all right. The death rate is very low, once they get to the refugee camp and can get water out of these great bladders of water that they have and get this very primitive corn meal food. Once they get there, they are all right. What is inspirational is you have these kids, and really they are kids. Most of them are in their 20s from all over the world, Australia, New Zealand, France, Ukraine, United States, Canada, who build cities of 20, 30, 40, 50,000 people in a couple of weeks to take care of these refugees as they come across. Somebody knows how to build latrines. Somebody, the French nurses are there for medical. It is just an enormously inspirational thing to see these different organizations, different nationalities all working together. You read a lot in the press about how dysfunctional refugee work and big problems like Kosovo and Bosnia are and how much backbiting there is. That is an exception. In most parts of the world where the refugee situations are really bad - Africa is certainly the worst - the reality is people really work together and do a spectacular job.

Q: Was there by the time you were there... This would have been about '92-'94.

ZIMMERMANN: That's right.

Q: Was there a pretty good relationship between the refugee bureau in the State Department and the NGOs, non-governmental organizations, because at one time they each sort of did their own thing. Things have developed quite a bit. How about during your period?

ZIMMERMANN: It was very interesting. The refugee bureau was by far the most heavily funded bureau in the State Department. I had a budget of \$741 million to spend every year. We had a very rigorous accounting system and policy system working out where we thought the money should go. Some of it was tied. A hundred million always went to Israel for Soviet Jews for example. But we were a big funder of UNHCR the big UN agency, and we were a funder of many of the private NGOs, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders and a lot of these. I discovered that the NGOs have actually two roles. One is to use the money that they get from us and spend it wisely in one form or another in refugee relief. So there is a kind of a seamless relationship between us and them. They want the money from us, if they are prepared to do a good job, they get the money from us. That's one role.

The second role is to be an advocate. That involved with many of them very hostile criticism of the United States. You are sending Vietnamese back to Vietnam from Hong Kong because you say they are not refugees. Of course they are refugees, they will say. It is an inhumane thing you are doing. These are organizations that are taking government money to do jobs in their first role. I found that curious and interesting, and I actually enjoyed engaging on the advocacy side with some of these organizations. Some of the noisiest and most hostile in their advocacy against the government were also the most effective in doing what needed to be done on the ground. So, I tried to make it my business to argue with them but also to keep good relations with them. I think that

worked quite well. I think whenever you are dealing with people who are real humanitarians they are often inclined not to care about the nuances or the difficulties of a problem from your point of view, because it is a black and white situation for them. So sometimes it is difficult to get them to see your point of view. But I saw it as, and my predecessor, Princeton Lyman also and my two successors Phyllis Oakley and Julia Taft have also seen it that way, that it is very important to make your case to them, try to understand them, but get them to try to understand you. So, I thought we had quite a good dialogue that way. In the Congress there are some very strong supporters of refugee money. We never had a problem getting the budget. We were the object of some jealousy in the State Department because we managed to survive most of the budget cutting that other bureaus had to take.

Q: Did you get involved in Somalia because that became quite hot?

ZIMMERMANN: I didn't personally get involved in Somalia. That became more of a military operation in which the military was delivering food, so I didn't personally get involved in it. I didn't visit Somalia.

Q: Haiti?

ZIMMERMANN: Haiti, yes. We had a very important program in Haiti. This was enormously controversial because during the rule of the military junta that displaced Aristide, the elected president, a lot of Haitians were trying to escape by boats. We were sending them back, which was a horrible thing to do, but the alternatives might have been horrible as well. The argument was they are economic refugees rather than political refugees. During the transition period after Clinton had been elected and before he took over, he had argued that we should accept, we should not turn people back on the high seas to Haiti. So it was my duty to warn the person that was doing his work on Haiti, who was Congressman Solarz, that if his policy prevailed, you might have a hundred thousand people trying to leave Haiti on boats on inauguration day. Very few of them would make it alive. So amazingly enough, he turned around on the issue and he got Aristide, he was in New York, to send a radio broadcast to the people of Haiti, not to build boats, not to come. I saw these boats in Haiti. They were just as rickety as you could imagine. All they cared about was getting as far as the first naval vessel, coast guard vessel and they would get picked up. They hoped they would go to Miami. Of course they wouldn't. This was a serious problem. What do you do about Haitians who have a right to a new life. If they were Cubans, they would be taken right to Miami, but Haitians were discriminated against. To give Clinton credit, I don't think he has gotten enough credit on this, he understood that this was not just a refugee problem. That was how it started. He had been governor of Arkansas when the boat people came from Cuba, and he understood the impact this can make on the gulf states. So he saw it from that optic. But he also understood that the only way he was going to solve the problem was to get the dictators out of Haiti and get Aristide back, bad as he was as a president. So he did it. He did it and he was prepared to use force to do it. At least for a number of years, it solved the refugee problem. The boats stopped coming because people at least though they had a

chance in Haiti. They weren't living under a dictatorship; they were living under the man they elected. Now with his successors things are beginning to deteriorate, but I think Clinton did both a smart thing and a courageous thing by going to the source, otherwise that issue would have never been settled. Our small bit of that history was to convince the Clinton people early on that the issue was a lot bigger than they thought.

Q: Well, this of course is, I can recall promises that Carter made about taking the second division out of South Korea. It took awhile for a learning thing. The second division is still in South Korea.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, this is the thing that sometimes the professionals can do. I mean an existing policy isn't necessarily wrong just because it is existing.

Q: Well, on your watch, did you see a problem, you can have a refugee program, I am thinking particularly of Vietnam but there may have been other ones, where pretty soon the people are declared refugees where maybe it is much more economics and all this. You get a cadre of professionals including non governmental organizations and including State Department and other people who are in place and this is the way it is and this is the way it always will be rather than saying the problem is either over or it is no longer the same problem.

ZIMMERMANN: We had actually had a Vietnam problem that I had to deal with. It was the last thing I did. I had already resigned from the government, but I had another six weeks and we had to deal with the problem of Vietnamese who had escaped mainly we think for economic reasons, but were in Southeast Asian countries and in Hong Kong. The UNHCR, the big refugee organization, ruled that they were not refugees, and they couldn't take care of them any more. They said they don't meet the refugee criteria; they are not political refugees; they are economic refugees, and we can't take care of them, so over to you. What do you do? Refugees International, which was one of the more contentious organizations and also one of the best, run by Lionel Rosenblatt, who was Craig Johnstone's sidekick in Vietnam, said, "You can't send them back to Vietnam. They will be persecuted there." We actually had a track record in Vietnam because a number - I think the number at that point was 40,000- had gone back to Vietnam from Asia and had not been persecuted. They were doing all right. We were actually able to monitor them, had monitors look at them. We had a wonderful Vietnamese in Washington who ran an organization. He had been the vice rector of Saigon University, left in '75 or '74, and he was actively engaged in encouraging Vietnamese to go back to Vietnam and particularly the ones who had been stranded in other countries. So we made an arrangement to interview them yet again to make sure they weren't refugees, then they would have to go back. They couldn't stay in the camps any more. You could not use public money to keep them in the camps. This was '94. There are still some there. The problem isn't completely over yet, but I think it mainly is. It is very hard when you are in refugee work to deal with your conscience because you can't take everybody. The United States takes more than anybody in the world, but doesn't take everybody. We can't take everybody, so some people have to be excluded. That is always difficult. There are some refugee

organizations that ultimately want you to take everybody, and you can't do that. It is a great example of the best sometimes being the enemy of the good.

Q: Did you get a feeling that the Clinton administration was more responsive than the Bush administration by and large to the refugee problem, or was it pretty much at a professional steady level?

ZIMMERMANN: I wouldn't say more responsive. Bush was heavily criticized for his Haitian policy, and he probably should have been. Clinton handled that one better. I think in general when you have had refugee crises like the Mariel crisis, the Cuban crisis, the Vietnamese crisis, I think whoever has been President of the United States has tended to respond pretty well with some defects. I think that has been true of Bush, and I think that has been true of Clinton.

Q: Well, you mentioned you resigned in '94, why?

ZIMMERMANN: There were two reasons, and I am not really sure which to give priority to. One is I was strongly at odds with our Bosnian policy. I had written a few memos to the Secretary of State to try to get it changed, and they had not been acknowledged. It was clear we weren't going to change. I wanted us to use air strikes, and they didn't want to do that. Not only did they not want to do it, but they used deception and subterfuge to pretend that we had a tough policy when we really didn't. One of the aspects of that was to make the humanitarian effort, which actually was working pretty well, carry the load of the policy. The pretense was that because we had a strong humanitarian effort and it was working, we really didn't need anything else. So in effect what I was doing, what the refugee bureau was doing was a kind of cover up for the lack of a really muscular policy. I didn't like being used as a dupe for that, so that was one issue. The other was when Clinton came in, I had been in the job for about six months. I was very excited about Clinton coming in; I had voted for him. I was very pleased that Tim Wirth, who was a friend, was going to be undersecretary for global affairs, and would have my bureau under his wing. But Wirth was unable to get the White House Personnel people to approve me for continuing. Nor did they say "Get him out."

Q: You were an assistant secretary.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, it is more complicated. This was one of the bureaus that was not run by an assistant secretary, as PM used to be. I was not an assistant secretary, and therefore I didn't require Senatorial approval, but my deputies were deputy assistant secretaries. But when Wirth came in at my suggestion he made it an assistant secretary position. He got the Secretary to agree to make it an assistant secretary position, so I would have had to have been nominated, and then approved by the Senate. The catch 22 was the White House personnel people were unwilling to nominate me. They made it very clear that they were looking for a minority person, although they couldn't find one, and Wirth was, I don't think he was objecting, but he interviewed a number of minority candidates, and he didn't find anyone good enough. So I hung on in a nether world of

doing the job but not being approved for the job. Many of the friends of refugees in the Senate understood that and they were very upset. They liked me because they felt I was a strong refugee advocate. They were suspicious that I would be succeeded by someone who wasn't or worried about it anyway. It began to be difficult to do the job because it began to get around in the refugee community and the Senate that I hadn't been approved, which made them think I didn't have the confidence of the Clinton administration. I think it never got farther than the personnel people.

Q: They were trying to establish a profile of having more women and minorities in...

ZIMMERMANN: Not even women. Women don't make it anymore, but it was minorities. This was a very clear mandate that came from the President and his wife with which I am in full agreement. But I don't believe in quotas. They are illegal. I felt if I was doing a good job, I should be kept on. If I wasn't doing a good job, I should be fired, but I didn't think it was being in between and not knowing where you stood. So that was part of the mix too why I left.

Q: Well, when you left, where did you go?

ZIMMERMANN: I was offered a year at Rand to do whatever I wanted, to write, which I did do. I waited a couple of weeks and then I wrote an op-ed piece which gave my views on Bosnia which ran in the Washington Post. Then I started writing what was to be a magazine article which ended up as a foreign affairs piece later on. I did all that at Rand, and I taught ad hoc at SAIS and the University of Maryland until I got the job at Columbia. I got the job at Columbia in '96, so for two years I taught a couple of classes at SAIS and the University of Maryland.

Q: So now you are teaching fully, regularly, at Columbia.

ZIMMERMANN: Well, I am stopping. I won't do it next year, but I have been for four years.

Q: Well, this is probably a good place to stop.

ZIMMERMANN: All right.

Q: Great.

End of interview