

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

AMBASSADOR DAVID E. ZWEIFEL

Interviewed by: Thomas J. Dunnigan
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is Thomas Dunnigan and the date is September 3, 1996. I'm about to interview Ambassador David Zweifel on behalf of the Foreign Service Oral History Program and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

Dave, would you say a little bit about your background, your education and service in the military perhaps, or whatever, prior to your entering the Foreign Service?

ZWEIFEL: I entered the Foreign Service in July, 1962 through the examination process. My fascination with foreign affairs, which eventually led me to this profession, began during my university days at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. There, I had been an education major, planning on a teaching career.

As part of my extracurricular activities, I became deeply involved in the Model United Nations program. This whetted my appetite for and interest in international issues. I also was a midshipman in the Naval ROTC unit. During my summer cruises, I got my first opportunity to travel abroad. I was further intrigued by what I saw and learned of foreign cultures, both then and later as a Naval officer serving in the Atlantic and Mediterranean areas.

Q: As you mentioned, you entered the Foreign Service by the examination route. What happened after you entered? Were you sent to a training course and how would you evaluate it? Was it a good course?

ZWEIFEL: It was a fascinating experience. During that time, new officers went through the A-100 course which lasted about eight weeks. The orientation covered a wide range of topics with a heavy emphasis on cross-cultural communication skills.

Having spent five years on active military duty, three on board a destroyer and two as an Instructor at the NROTC Unit at Princeton University, I was a bit older than most of my entering classmates.

Among the stellar members of that entering group were National Security Advisor Tony Lake, former Assistant Secretary of State Dick Holbrooke, and John Campbell who later founded the professional journal, Foreign Policy.

Since I had not previously studied any foreign languages, I anticipated a lengthy stay in Washington for language training after completion of the A-100 course. Instead, I was among the first of my class to depart. I was assigned to Brazil where I was to study Portuguese at the FSI Institute at Rio de Janeiro.

Q: Was it good training there or not?

ZWEIFEL: It was excellent. At the outset, I did not show as a naturally gifted linguist. But, through my absolute determination to succeed and my love for Brazil, which continues down to the present time, I mastered the language and still have a good command of Portuguese.

Q: What did you do on your first job after training?

ZWEIFEL: I had been assigned to a junior officer rotational slot at Brasilia. During the time I was in language training in Rio, my orders were changed to assign me to the embassy which, at that time, was still located in Rio.

I had the good luck to begin my rotation in the Political Section. Then, as a result of the tragic death of one of the middle-grade officers in that section, I ended up spending my entire first tour doing political and labor reporting.

Q: Lincoln Gordon was the Ambassador at that time?

ZWEIFEL: Yes indeed. Ambassador Gordon was a very able and distinguished diplomat who had come from academia as a political appointee in the Kennedy Administration. He did an outstanding job in my opinion. Shortly after I began in the Political Section, John Gordon Mein came as DCM. He, too, was an outstanding officer and diplomat. Tragically, he was later assassinated while serving as our Ambassador to Guatemala.

Q: I'd known Linc Gordon in London, where he was our Economic Minister at the time. He was a true intellectual. The government had not completed its move to Brasilia, I gather, by the time you were in Brazil.

ZWEIFEL: No, we had an Embassy Branch Office in Brasilia at the time. As I recall, there were three or four Foreign Service Officers assigned to it. Bob Dean, who later served as Ambassador to Peru, was the Officer In Charge in Brasilia. It was a small operation, and all reporting was routed through the embassy in Rio.

The Brazilian Federal Government had nominally moved by that time, but even the members of Congress rushed back to Rio every weekend. A standing joke was that the only weekend recreation in Brasilia was to ride the only escalator installed there at the time. Most governmental functions were still located in Rio.

Q: Were the Communists influential in Brazil in those days?

ZWEIFEL: When I got to Rio de Janeiro at the end of October, 1962, the Brazilian President was Joao Goulart. He was clearly left-leaning in his political orientation. It was during a time of intense maneuvering in the Cold War between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, and we tended to think in zero-sum terms. If Goulart followed through with his socialist policies, we would lose a round to the Russians. Thus, were very concerned by developments in Brazil.

Indeed, the situation continued to deteriorate, culminating in the military coup in April, 1964.

Q: What about the Cubans? Did they have a strong influence there?

ZWEIFEL: The Cubans enjoyed good standing with the Goulart regime. This was an added concern for Washington.

Remember, I had departed Washington for Rio at the end of October, 1962. You will recall what was happening during that time.

Q: The Missile Crisis.

ZWEIFEL: Precisely. The Cuban Missile Crisis. As a matter of fact, when I left New York on my way to Rio, everyone was glumly half- expecting the bombs to fall. I stopped for a weekend in Caracas. Without a knowledge of Spanish, I spent those days frustrated at my inability to find out exactly what was going on. It was like being in another world.

By the time I got to Brazil, the crisis had begun to abate, but it was still a tense, interesting time.

Q: Was there a strong amount of anti-Americanism in Brazil when you were there?

ZWEIFEL: On the contrary, the Brazilians were very, very friendly. Even though they had a government which, as I noted, was quite antithetical to our own philosophy and opposed to many of our policies, the people were by and large very well disposed towards Americans, very hospitable. They especially admired then President John F. Kennedy.

Q: What was the reaction there to the Kennedy assassination?

ZWEIFEL: There was a tremendous outpouring of grief and disbelief. All of us who were then adults can clearly remember that experience, where we were, what we were doing. Everything in Rio came to an absolute halt that afternoon. Long lines formed for days after as people came to the embassy to sign the condolence book. The Brazilians to this day worship the concept of everything that Kennedy stood for. He was a very, very popular figure in Brazil-as he was, obviously, globally.

Q: Yes, but there particularly, I suppose. He did a lot of things for Latin America: the Alliance for Progress, the Peace Corps.

You mentioned the Army revolting against President Goulart. Did that have an effect on the Embassy at all?

ZWEIFEL: Our Military Attaché during that time was an Army colonel by the name of Vernon “Dick” Walters. An exceptional person in so many ways, he had been the Liaison Officer with the Brazilian Expeditionary Force which fought in Italy during the Second World War. As a result he had become a very close friend and confidant of his Brazilian counterparts.

The so-called “Revolution” which unseated Goulart in early 1964 was led by these officers, many of them by then generals. Walters knew what was in the offing. Indeed by the time the coup took place, it was widely expected, only a matter of time. It was not a surprise to anyone.

The reaction among Brazilians was one of great relief. Sadly, the revolution ushered in twenty years of military dictatorship-headed by those same friends of Dick Walters. But at the time, there was tremendous popular support for the movement.

Q: Were there any threats against the Embassy or not?

ZWEIFEL: No, the Embassy itself was never under any sort of threat. In later years many Brazilians increasingly saw an American hand behind the coup. More specifically, some blamed Lincoln Gordon who remains a somewhat controversial figure in Brazil down to the present day.

Of course this was nonsense, although we welcomed the ouster of Goulart and his leftist cronies.

Q: The change?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, the change, believing that it would stabilize a situation that was deteriorating very rapidly. The Kennedy Administration was not keen to see another Castro-like radical regime in the Hemisphere, and this seemed to be in prospect under Goulart.

Q: After three years at your first post and an exciting three years they were.

ZWEIFEL: Two years.

Q: Two years. You were brought back to Washington and assigned to the Office of Personnel.

ZWEIFEL: That's right. It was the first of two personnel assignment I had during the course of my career.

Q: What did you do in that job, specifically?

ZWEIFEL: I was assigned to the Career Management and Assignments Division. Although I was still a junior officer, only on my second tour, my job was to counsel mid-level political and economic officers.

On reflection, that job was an example of just how much the personnel practices in the Foreign Service have changed over the last thirty years. This ranges from personnel management and techniques to the manner in which information and records are handled. I was working, at the time, with one of the officers whom I always have regarded as one of the princes of the Foreign Service, Bob Houghton.

Q: I agree entirely.

ZWEIFEL: Bob was a tremendous human being and a very devoted Foreign Service Officer. He was the Chief of the Division and I was his Indian. We began, among other things, what was known by the acronym of MUST: Management Utilization Skills and Techniques. What this involved was for counselors to sit down and review a performance evaluation file, preferably with the person in question. Remember, at that time, there were certain confidential parts of the performance file which were not shown to the rated person at the time they were prepared. These could only be reviewed during a counseling session in the office of personnel.

After going through the file and counseling the officer, we would then work together to try to project a series of career enhancing assignments for the ensuing ten years. We tried to build in concepts such as exposure to more than one area and field of experience, as well as appropriate training.

On the assignment's front, information was processed manually. It was cumbersome, error prone, too reliant on personal recollections. We thought we were making a tremendous leap forward when we acquired a poke and shake system. With this, you could perforate the edges of an officer's profile card to indicate competence in certain areas. For example, if you needed to identify a Danish-speaking economics officer, you could insert a long needle in a batch of cards, shake, and out would fall all Danish speakers. Another shake of that group would reduce it to economic specialists. What a primitive system! And this was 1965.

Q: We can debate this later, but, in some ways, I prefer what we did then to what goes on now.

ZWEIFEL: I think there was a much higher sense of professionalism and discipline at that time. Officers, obviously, were very interested in where they were going to be posted, and they tried to get the assignments that would enhance their careers and meet their ambitions and needs. But, once assigned, there was a general acceptance. You did not have a lot of appeals or attempts to reverse assignment decisions.

Q: What were your major problems in that assignment?

ZWEIFEL: Looking back, the dynamics of the process were much the same as they are today. The process was and is to try to match the Service's needs against the desires and needs of the individual and the receiving post or bureau. There inevitably was some tension in that process as a receiving organization requested assignment of an individual whom we felt should move in a different direction. One of the constants in personnel over time has been the on-going debate about the merits of a centralized vs. decentralized personnel system.

Q: As you know, I was doing the Junior Officers at the time you were working on the mid-career officers. One thing we were sheltered from was that you didn't get a lot of

interference from on high with individual assignments. You were dealing with more advanced officers. Was there more pressure from on top or special favors requested?

ZWEIFEL: I think that you have a natural iterative process as individuals progress in the Service. Each of us establishes a record. That record is going to serve as a basis for determining not only promotions, but assignments as well. At the very junior end of the spectrum, that record is very slim, if it exists at all. So, you had more of a free rein during the assignments process. Later on, the person has a career record that will either stand them in good stead and argue in favor of good assignments, or the contrary might be the case. So, I think you have to accept that there will be more pressure in the cases of higher ranking individuals. Ambassadors, for example, know certain people and want them as members of their staffs.

Q: After two years in Personnel, in 1967, you were assigned to language training in Beirut. How did this come about?

ZWEIFEL: Again, going back to my service in the Navy, I had spent time in the Mediterranean, visited the Middle East briefly, had become intrigued with the area. I also had done some reading and study on the area. And I had a mentor in Bob Houghton, an Arabist who had spent the major part of his career in the Middle East. He encouraged me in that direction. It was a close call. I had enjoyed my time in Brazil tremendously, met and married my wife there. But I thought that I should try an alternate area before making a long-term career commitment. As it turned out, the Arabic language training was the prelude to over seventeen years spent in the Middle East or, in Washington, work devoted to developments in that area.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the Beirut language training. Do they train you in all forms of Arabic, or one Eastern, Western-how do they do that?

ZWEIFEL: At the time, we had two Arabic language training programs, one in Tangier focused on Western or Maghreb Arabic and the one in Beirut which I attended. That program was based on modern written Arabic. The spoken Arabic we learned was a Levantine dialect, probably the most widely useful across the Arab world apart from North Africa. Colloquial Arabic was being greatly shaped and influenced by Gamal Abdul Nasser, the preeminent leader in the Arab World, he was a voluble, forceful speaker, listened to by all strata of Arab societies. This meant that there was a certain Egyptianization of the language.

Q: How many pupils were you in that Arabic class?

ZWEIFEL: There were students at several stages going through, a continuous flow. The pupils were State officers, those from the Agency, USIS, etc. It was an inter-agency program of instruction. As I recall, there were probably a total of 20-22 at that time. The numbers were somewhat reduced after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War.

Q: Yes, I wanted to ask you about the Mideast War, what affect that had on your training.

ZWEIFEL: It had a lot of effect on me personally. When the war broke out on Monday, June 5, 1967, FSI classes were immediately suspended. The Ambassador and staff realized that they had these extra bodies, the idled students. Again, as a comment on how fast things move and how quixotically we tend to fall back on plans in times of emergency, it was decided that we students would be pressed into service. The Embassy's Emergency Action Plan (EAP) called for mailing advisories to resident Americans in times of crisis.

Q: Mailing them out?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. That first afternoon, we FSI students were put to work stuffing envelopes with these cautionary letters. I don't think any of them ever actually were posted. Events moved so fast that, by the time we had finished stuffing the envelopes, the decision had been made for a full-scale evacuation. All Americans were advised (over BBC, VOA, etc.) to leave Lebanon if possible. Ever since, I have been extremely skeptical about the efficacy of the EAP process. In most instances, it should be one of the first documents destroyed. I have never known of a case in which those managing a crisis have had time to peruse the thick documents we have mandated.

The first night of the war, it was decided that we should destroy classified and sensitive documents. The process involved lugging the papers up to the roof of the building-the self-same chancery destroyed several years later in the awful car-bomb attack. There, we put them into burn barrels and ignited the lot. The fires lit up the night skies in the otherwise blacked-out city. Many Lebanese contended that we were signaling the Israelis. Nonsense, of course.

Q: No shredding machines in those days?

ZWEIFEL: We had shredders, but not of sufficient capacity to handle the volume of material. Meanwhile, an Operations Center of sorts had been established at the Embassy. I was to stand a six-hour watch there starting at six o' clock Tuesday morning. When that time was up, the officer who was supposed to replace me just was not able to function. So I stayed on throughout the afternoon. I got home that night briefly to get a suitcase. My wife and infant son had already been evacuated, along with the other dependents and many members of the staff.

Wednesday came. The Lebanese had asked our very able Ambassador, Dwight Porter, to leave. They did not declare him Persona Non Grata, but rather just let it be known that it would be better if he were out of the country for a time.

The last evacuation plane, the one which would transport the Porters, was to leave that afternoon, and I planned to be on it. Just as I was ready to go to the lobby, Ed Djerejian, then the Ambassador's Staff Aide, came to me and said "The Ambassador wants you to

stay”. So I was attached to the Embassy's hard core residual staff while all my FSI colleagues and their families spent the next six weeks on the beaches in Italy and Greece. My wife and son were among them. Meanwhile I was stuck in Beirut. FSI management did take pity on me. After the school was reopened they, in essence, said “poor Dave. He needs a break”. So they let me take two weeks annual leave-at my expense-to get a breather.

Q: Well, that's very generous! Tell me, Dave, was there any real fighting that the Lebanese did in the 67 War?

ZWEIFEL: The Lebanese were only marginally engaged. The only serious disturbances in Beirut came on the Saturday after the fighting was over. That was the day on which Nasser briefly offered his resignation. That led to widespread street demonstrations. There was a lot of railing against the Americans, seen as surrogates of the victorious Israelis.

Q: In Beirut?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. Cars were burned, including a number of vehicles belonging to the Embassy staff. Windows were broken and that sort of thing, but no real fighting or any very widespread violence. None of our personnel were injured.

Q: I know, but those were tense days and one never knew what was going to happen next. After your completion of the language training, and after this adventure during the 67 War, you went in 1968 to Amman.

ZWEIFEL: I arrived at the beginning of 1969. One result of the Six Day War was that the market for Arabists was drastically reduced. Many of our embassies and other posts in the areas were closed as host governments broke diplomatic relations with Washington. A few were kept functioning as interests sections under friendly flags, but even in those cases, with reduced American presence. So there were few job openings for those of us who were coming out of training at the time. I was among those who faced a pretty bleak prospect. Even though I had by then determined I wanted to specialize as a political officer, I was assigned to a consular position.

An interesting footnote: in November, 1968, my wife and I drove to Amman. We were already assigned and wanted to look for housing, etc. As I recall, we were the first official Americans who were allowed back through Syria after the war. The Syrians were very hospitable. They treated us with real courtesy, even though the government in Damascus had broken relations with the U.S.

Q: That's good, although you never knew when you started out what you were going to face. Harry Symmes was the Ambassador?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, he was Ambassador to Jordan when I got to Amman. He had spent long years in the Arab world and was a very competent Arabist. He ultimately did not have a successful mission in Jordan, not necessarily due to his own actions, but it was just a difficult time in our bilateral relations. King Hussein eventually asked that he be withdrawn.

Q: Yes, I understand that. I remember, he was very well thought of. I remember the day when he was sent out to Jordan as Ambassador. Everyone thought it was a great thing for him. Tell me about living in Jordan in those days.

ZWEIFEL: Jordan during that period—we're now talking about early 1969 until the end of 1970—was an increasingly difficult and even dangerous place to be.

Q: That is, for Americans?

ZWEIFEL: For Americans, Jordanians, Palestinians and everybody else as well. But certainly for Americans. The political situation was deteriorating rapidly. The “Fedayeen”, as the Palestinian guerrilla movement was known, were increasingly and openly defiant, in opposition to the King. The security situation was in a sharp downward spiral. Our daily lives were a commentary on becoming inured to even dangerous circumstances. We thought nothing, for example, of delaying our departure for lunch if there was a raging fire fight in the streets. The matter came to a head for the Embassy in early April, 1970. I believe Joe Sisco was by then already Under Secretary for Political Affairs in the Department.

Q: Yes, I think he'd already moved up.

ZWEIFEL: Sisco had scheduled a trip to the area, including a stop in Amman. Just before he was scheduled to arrive in Jordan, we experienced a day of sharp violence and rioting in Amman. Our Chancery was completely trashed. The Ambassador's limousine was among the vehicles which were burned. Our USIS Center, located in a different part of the city, was fire bombed and completely destroyed.

It obviously was a difficult and dangerous situation. Ambassador Symmes, in my view with full justification, recommended that, given the precarious security situation, the Secretary Sisco cancel his stop in Jordan. He did so. King Hussein, for equally understandable political reasons, felt that this was an insult, indicating that he was not in control, unable to provide the necessary security for Mr. Sisco. That was the straw that broke the back. The King asked that the Ambassador be withdrawn.

A couple of months later, in June, the fighting between the Fedayeen and the Royal Jordanian military forces became much more severe. In terms of the Embassy, this culminated in the tragic death of our Assistant Military Attaché, Bob Perry, gunned down in his own home in front of his wife and small children.

I have often said that the only time I was really afraid in all of this turmoil was when a small group of teenage guerrillas, armed with Kalashnikovs, came into our garden one Friday afternoon. I was home with my small children, out in the garden. The youngsters came in to ask for funds. As politely as I could, I told them I did not want to become involved in their issue. One of them became a bit argumentative. Another member, aware that things threatened to get out of hand, suggested they all leave. As they got to the gate, the one who had been particularly obstreperous released the safety on his weapon and pointed it at my children. Fortunately, that was all that happened.

Overall, those were tense, often uncomfortable times. Our movements were very restricted.

Q: It was downright dangerous at times.

ZWEIFEL: Yes, it was.

Q: After Ambassador Symmes left, who was in charge of the Mission?

ZWEIFEL: Harry O'Dell was the Chargé throughout that summer.

Q: When did Dean Brown come in?

ZWEIFEL: I'll get to that in a minute. In my opinion, Harry O'Dell was totally miscast for the responsibilities he now faced. His performance says something, in my view, of how officers are sometimes selected. Harry Symmes, for all his talents, had chosen O'Dell to be his DCM for two, primary reasons. First, he wanted someone who had an economic background; O'Dell was an economic cone officer. Secondly, the Ambassador wanted to make sure he did not have a DCM who might upstage him. O'Dell fit that requirement as well. He was not familiar with the Middle East and did not speak Arabic. Put to the test, he proved to be an very weak leader, demonstrably unable to manage in the crisis which evolved. He was an exceptionally poor choice to be thrust into leadership of the Mission during that critical period.

The crisis came to a head in early September, 1970, with the near simultaneous hijacking of four passenger aircraft. A PanAm plane was flown to Cairo, where it later was blown up. Planes from Swissair, TWA, and British Airways were all flown to Dawson's Landing, an old World War II gravel strip east of Amman. The situation was further complicated because the area immediately around the landing strip was ringed by Iraqi troops which had interposed themselves between the Jordanian army and the terrorists who were holding the planes. The hostages were held for a number of days. Early on, Charge O'Dell decided this was a protection and welfare issue. As Consul, I was thus the person who handled the problem the Embassy's involvement in trying to resolve the crisis. We quickly perceived the objectives of the PFLP (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the group holding the hostages), as transparent as they were ingenious. They sought to deal seriatim with each of the governments which had nationals on the hijacked

planes. By process of elimination, any Israeli nationals would be left with no interlocutor other than the U.S. Among other factors, our evolving policy on terrorism was already firm on one point: no direct negotiation with terrorists or actions which could be construed to amount to recognition of the PFLP. We faced a real dilemma. The key from our perspective was to hold the line, forestall that negotiating tactic.

The solution we came to was to involve the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). That organization entered the scene as the intermediary between interested governments and those holding the captives. The indirect discussions went on for several days. Finally, all but six of the hostages were released, then the three aircraft at Dawson's Landing were blown up. Ironically, the six who were still held captive were all holders of U.S. official or diplomatic passports. Obviously, the terrorists thought they were more valuable as hostages.

You asked when Dean Brown entered the picture. He had already been named to be Ambassador to Jordan, and his arrival was imminent. When the crisis broke out, the Department accelerated both his arrival and that of Bill Brubeck, the latter to be the new DCM. Brown arrived literally the day before the conflict between the fedayeen and King Hussein's military forces erupted into full-blown civil war.

Q: I was in The Netherlands at that time, and one of the planes had been hijacked out of Amsterdam, as I recall. Leila Khalid, the famous woman terrorist, showed up there. So there was tremendous interest in what was happening. Those were tense days for you, I know.

ZWEIFEL: Yes, exciting but very tense.

Q: Did you spend a lot of time at the site?

ZWEIFEL: No, we could never get to the landing strip where the hijacked planes were held. As I said, we worked through the ICRC. At all hours of the day and night, we would be moving around, trying to hold meetings. By that time, the situation had become very tenuous and dangerous as far as personal movements were concerned. There was a lot of gunfire on the streets, and the Fedayeen appeared to have the upper hand.

Q: Did you have a number of people to take care of on your hands as a result of this release?

ZWEIFEL: Once the hostages were released, they were brought to the intercontinental Hotel in Amman. Some of them were kept there during the civil war period which ensued. But as soon as that fighting was over, they were able to leave the country.

Q: Tell us about the fighting which broke out almost simultaneously.

ZWEIFEL: The hijacking led directly into the fighting. King Hussein realized that this was the ultimate showdown. He ordered his loyal military forces to crush the Fedayeen.

The night before that order was executed, there was sort of a council of war at our DCM's residence. Ambassador Dean Brown had immediately taken charge. He was a very strong leader, a very decisive person. He quickly determined who was going to be inside the chancery when the war broke out and who would be left outside. Twenty-nine of us were going to be in the Chancery. So, the next morning when the guns opened up, we were there.

Q: You'd known that the guns were about to open up?

ZWEIFEL: By that time, we knew that the situation was about to blow up. We had good intelligence on that. As it turned out, after nine days entrapment in the Chancery under fire, Dean Brown left in an armored personnel carrier. It was a noted moment in Foreign Service lore: Dean Brown, accompanied by Hume Horan, our Political Counselor, going off in the APC to present credentials to King Hussein.

I finally got out of the Chancery-which was never liberated-after 13 days.

Q: I've heard of places where the Ambassadors were taken by horse and carriage to present credentials, but never by an APC!

ZWEIFEL: It was the only time that had ever happened.

Q: Some of our people were taken hostage, weren't they?

ZWEIFEL: Bob Pelletreau, who was then an officer in the Political Section and John Stewart, a USIS Officer, were both held briefly by elements of the Fedayeen. Months earlier, Morris Draper similarly had been kidnapped and held for three days. Has he been interviewed for this Oral History project?

Q: I have not, but I think he has been interviewed. I know Maury well. But, no, I have not personally interviewed him. And there was looting and, I gather, cases of rape going on?

ZWEIFEL: Earlier, in the May-June time period, a number of American women had been raped. Then, all dependents were evacuated. By September, when the Civil War occurred, working staff members were the only American officials still in Amman.

Q: Did the Embassy regard the King's position as shaky though this or not? Did we think that he would come out on top?

ZWEIFEL: We not only thought he would come out on top, we saw it as critical to our own interests that he do so. I suppose there are those who felt that he had dithered too long, that he should have acted earlier. But I don't think there was ever any real question

that he had to prevail. Of course, as events unfolded, this became a very complicated international crisis. We had moved the Sixth Fleet off the shores of the Eastern Mediterranean and were poised to intervene if necessary. Hafez al Assad, who had recently come to power in Syria through a military coup, finally intervened in Northern Jordan with a tank force. That took some of the implicit pressure of the Iraqis off the King and helped stabilize the situation. The Israelis were also tacitly cooperative. It was generally perceived that the King's survival was in everyone's interest.

Q: What was the Soviet reaction to all this?

ZWEIFEL: The Soviets were playing a very devious game. They were supporting the Fedayeen politically and militarily, while maintaining correct diplomatic relations with the Jordanian Government. They perceived that Soviet interests would be served by turmoil as opposed to our objectives-regional stability based on the status quo. This, however, meant that we wanted Israel to be militarily dominant in the region. That policy can't obviously put us at odds with all the Arab governments on many issues.

Q: Was there any fear of Israeli intervention at that time?

ZWEIFEL: As I said, the Israelis were certainly willing and prepared to cooperate. In my opinion, they would have intervened unilaterally to save King Hussein if that had become necessary. That would have been the kiss of death. It was a prospect that concerned Washington, and we were relieved when this scenario was forestalled by Assad having entered the picture, coming to the King's aid.

Q: Did we have any line to the Fedayeen, to the PLO?

ZWEIFEL: There was no official contact or dialogue. One of the funny little stories I have always treasured is that at one point in the early days of the hijacking, a good Jordanian friend of mine offered to put me in contact with the hijackers or their representatives. After clearing that proposal with Charge o' Dell, the Jordanian contact and I headed off in his Volkswagen Beetle. Deep in one of the riskier areas of the city, we met with a PFLP official. Somewhere in my papers, I think I still have the scratch pad with the PFLP letterhead on which I took notes. That meeting gave us our first indication of the terrorists demands for the release of the hostages. When I got back to the Embassy, the Station Chief was fit to be tied. But, since I had checked first with the Charge, he had to swallow hard and get on with other matters.

Later during the hostage incident, through an Egyptian military officer who was cooperating with us (although Nasser had broken diplomatic relations with Washington), I received a list of Palestinians being held in Israeli jails. The PFLP was demanding their release as a condition for freeing the hostages.

We duly cabled this list of names to Washington. A "Flash" precedence message came back, directing that the list be returned to its source. We refused to accept this

information-but obviously, had it in our possession! We did not want to appear to be in any way willing to negotiate or act as intermediaries for the terrorists. At the time, it signaled an evolution in our policy for dealing with such situations. I strongly agree with the concept that we should not negotiate with terrorists.

Q: During this period of tremendous upheaval, what was the role that Nasser was playing?

ZWEIFEL: Nasser was so outraged by the fact that the civil war had broken out in Jordan, that Arab was fighting Arab, that he broke diplomatic relations with King Hussein. In that sense, he sided with the Fedayeen.

We had an interesting sidelight on Jordanian-Egyptian relations at the time. Between our Consulate building on Jebel Webdeih and the main Chancery was a small house, the home of a distinguished Palestinian, a Brigadier General in the Jordanian Army. His name was Mohammed Daoud, and he had been the Jordanian Representative on the Joint Armistice Commission established after the 1948 War of Partition between Israel and the Arab States. He was a firm believer in seeking a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. On more than one occasion, he told me that if the circumstances ever again were right for direct negotiations, he considered himself to be the best-qualified person to represent Jordan.

As it turned out, in the fighting of September, 1970, King Hussein named Daoud to be his Prime Minister. Rather than negotiating peace, Daoud's mandate was to preside over a wartime cabinet. The King sent him to Cairo in an attempt to dissuade Nasser from breaking relations. Those attempts failed, Nasser broke relations. Ironically, within the month he had succumbed to a heart attack.

In the meantime, the failure was such a psychological blow to Daoud that he cracked. He left a note in the Nile Hilton in Cairo, resigning as Prime Minister of Jordan. Then he went into political exile in Libya where he eventually died without ever returning to Jordan.

King Hussein historically has been magnanimous, one of the secrets of his political longevity and survival. After Daoud's death, the King had the body returned for honorable burial in Amman.

Q: Why wasn't the UN actively involved during this crisis?

ZWEIFEL: I believe that the de facto impasse between the U.S. and the Soviets on Arab-Israeli issues would have made it problematic to get agreement on UN action. We perceived that the Soviets would use their veto in the Security Council to block effective measures. Frankly, there was also considerable American skepticism about the efficacy of the UN's ability to handle this sort of crisis.

Q: Did the fighting undermine or strengthen the stability of Hussein's regime?

ZWEIFEL: In the aftermath, it obviously was a tremendous plus for the King who managed to reestablish his authority in a very real way. That authority had been increasingly contested, even tenuous. Despite the high cost in terms of human lives and damage to the economy, the King's decision to face down the Fedayeen enabled him to stand above internal challenges to his leadership. The military confrontation was critical to the King's survival. Our interests, as well as his, were served by the fact that the Jordanian Army prevailed over the Fedayeen. As an aside, remember that during the September episode Yasser Arafat had to flee Amman disguised as a woman.

Q: And what was the overall effect on the Arab cause? He had Syrians in Jordan, we had the Palestinians fighting Jordanians.

ZWEIFEL: The fallout unfolded in many ways. The Palestinian rejectionists who had opted for armed conflict rather than negotiations were forced out of Jordan. The militants regrouped in Lebanon. And we all know the aftermath of that, the tragic Civil War which broke out in Lebanon in 1975, the Israeli invasion of 1982. In a sense, we are still dealing with some of the consequences in issues such as the Israeli "Security Zone" in Southern Lebanon, the Syrian presence in that country, etc.

Q: Of course, there was still a heavy presence of Palestinians in Jordan, although the fighters, the PLO, the Fedayeen moved out.

ZWEIFEL: Yes. That goes back to the historic fact that, after the 1948 war, the only country in the Arab world to grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees was Jordan. The Palestinians who took refuge in other countries were tolerated, given permission to live and work. But only in Jordan were they granted the right to citizenship.

Q: Did we increase our military equipment to Jordan after that?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. We had a significant military cooperation program with the Jordanians which included selling them training and equipment. That continued. Despite ups and downs, military support has always been a factor in U.S.-Jordanian relations.

Q: How about the Embassy's size?

ZWEIFEL: We had reduced the number of personnel before the fighting, although perhaps not as drastically as would have been desirable. I think that there were probably still about forty American employees at the Embassy in September, 1970. It remained at that relatively low level for a time, then gradually was increased again.

Q: Are there any other comments that you'd like to make about that tense period in Jordan before we move on?

ZWEIFEL: It was an exciting time. We had a stellar staff in Jordan during that period. Maury Draper, Hume Horan-the Service's most outstanding Arabist in my opinion. Bob Pelletreau was the second ranking officer in the Political Section at the time.

Q: You had quality if not quantity. Did you have assistance in your consular work or were you entirely alone?

ZWEIFEL: In terms of American staff, I had a part-time vice consul. I had a policy during that time. It was before there were lexguard windows and other security devices to shield consular officers from the visa public. Applicants entered my office, and sat as I interviewed them. My policy was that if the applicant had a grenade hanging from his belt, I denied the visa. After all, some predecessor of mine had issued a visa to Sirhan Sirhan, Robert Kennedy's assassin.

Q: That was probably a fairly wise policy! By the way, you mentioned Sirhan Sirhan. Was there much reaction in Jordan to his condemnation in the States?

ZWEIFEL: I do not personally recall anyone who considered that a miscarriage of justice. Although some in the Arab World sought to contrive a political justification for Sirhan, Jordanians of all walks of life apparently perceived that he should be punished for his crime.

Q: At the end of 1970, you moved on.

ZWEIFEL: Yes. Having gone through family separation in Beirut during the Six-Day War and then a more extended time while posted to Jordan during the civil strife there, we decided it was time to reestablish our Latin American ties. The Service did something which I do not believe was often done. To those of us coming up for reassignment, the Department, in essence, said "within reason, let us know what you want and we will see that you get it." I decided that I wanted to go back to Latin America as a Political Officer. I was assigned to a political job in Mexico City.

Q: That's excellent. Did you take any Spanish language training before you went?

ZWEIFEL: I had a few weeks of an FSI program called "HILT" or High Intensity Language Transition. The thesis was that I would be able to retread my Portuguese, which was still very good, into Spanish. The program was moderately successful. I ended up with a decent command of Spanish, although my use of both that language and Portuguese were somewhat corrupted one by the other.

Q: So, you went there as a Political Officer?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. I also had interesting collateral portfolios in the Political Section. For example, I was the Embassy's Science Officer. That work grew to such an extent that, eventually, a very senior Science Officer, Andre Simonpietri, was assigned full time to

the position. I was also Narcotics Coordinator at the Embassy. Again, as that problem burgeoned as a bilateral issue, a full-time position was created and an officer assigned specifically and exclusively to deal with the problems of interagency coordination.

Q: I hear there's a Section now on that.

ZWEIFEL: Yes.

Q: What were your problems? Did you have many problems?

ZWEIFEL: In a way, Mexico is one of the most fascinating of assignments an American Foreign Service Officer could wish for. I suppose the same could be said for service in Canada. Our immediate neighbors ipso facto have a unique status. You are not dealing just with foreign relations. Almost every issue also has a domestic component.

The major issues between the U.S. and Mexico at the time were, as they still are in many respects, illegal immigration, the trafficking of narcotics, economic cooperation. A particularly complex and important issue was that of the salinity of the Colorado River, again a problem that was as much a domestic one as it was of international relations.

Q: Tell us about activities on the other side: Soviet, Cuban, Chinese?

ZWEIFEL: Mexico maintained relations with Cuba after the rest of the OAS members had ostracized the Castro regime. That was a policy difference, a thorn in our bilateral relations with Mexico, although certainly within bounds. The Soviets were also extremely active in Mexico and had a very large Embassy there. Their primary target-even though in Mexico-was the U.S. We, in turn, devoted resources to trying to track what the Soviets were up to. It was a mutual wariness. The Chinese were less active in Mexico during that period.

Q: We had one of our officers, Terry Leonhardy, kidnapped while you were there.

ZWEIFEL: We had two such cases. Terry Leonhardy was kidnapped in Guadalajara where he was Consul General at the time. He was held for about a week or ten days, then released unharmed.

A more tragic case was that of John Patterson, a first tour consular officer serving in Hermosillo. The Consulate General there habitually closed down over the lunch hour. One day, John was seen leaving for lunch in the company of someone vaguely familiar, someone who had been around the office on occasion.

When the offices reopened after lunch, there was a strange note from John under the door saying, in essence, "Apparently I have been kidnapped"-not much more.

We had, at that time, a Legal Attaché at the Embassy, an FBI Officer who was able to work closely with Mexican law enforcement authorities. He was able to obtain the registries of all Americans who had stayed at hotels in Hermosillo for several days surrounding the incident. Those were run through FBI records files in Washington. Only one was a hit, that of a man named Billy Joe Keasy.

Next, the FBI put together a montage of perhaps a hundred photos of various men. This was shown to the local employee who had seen John leaving the office on the day of the kidnapping. This employee spent a lot of time going over the pictures, finally saying “well, it was either A or B” as he picked out two of the photos. It turned out that both were of Billy Joe Keasy, taken ten years apart.

Meanwhile, a legal wiretap had been placed on the telephone of our Consul General, Elmer Yelton. Through this means, we received the only subsequent contact from Patterson's captor. The caller purported to be a fellow victim and stated that a ransom would be required with details to follow. As it turned out, Patterson's wife was prepared, in principle, to meet such demands. In the meantime, the taped telephone conversation was played for Keasy's brother whose immediate reaction was “Oh yeah, that's Billy Joe.” His mother was a bit more circumspect, but the evidence was mounting.

By that time, the FBI had staked out both the water bed factory where Keasy was employed and his apartment. To make a long story shorter, he came back to the apartment one afternoon and was apprehended. Since the Mexicans had no particular interest in seeking his extradition for a crime against another American, the most serious charge that could be levied against Keasy was conspiracy to kidnap. That, even though it turned out that Patterson had been killed almost immediately after being taken captive.

Q: So he escaped?

ZWEIFEL: In a sense. After serving three years in prison, he presumably is again out on the street.

Q: Sad, sad, sad story. You were there when Secretary Rogers visited Mexico City. Did that have any consequences?

ZWEIFEL: Secretary Rogers was a fine person but, let's face it, overshadowed by Henry Kissinger who was then National Security Adviser in the White House. Rogers came to Latin America on what turned out to be his swan song. I think he did a fine job as Secretary. In relation to Mexico, some foreign policy problems had been more or less resolved, others were more intractable and of a continuing nature, only amenable to management rather than solution: the immigration issues, those related to narcotics, others which continue down to this day.

Q: Was terrorism a factor while you were there?

ZWEIFEL: I never felt that terrorism in Mexico was of the same magnitude as it was in the Middle East.

Q: After your tour there of four years, you went back to the Middle East?

ZWEIFEL: I had been offered a tempting job by Ambassador Dwight Porter, who by then was in Vienna as our Permanent Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency. He invited me to become his political officer. I thought that would be pretty spiffy, maybe not in terms of professional challenge, but it would be nice to be in Vienna. The Department informed me that, after a review of my file, I had been in the field too long and should return to Washington. The following week, I was assigned to Oman!

Q: What was your job in Oman?

ZWEIFEL: I was the first-ever DCM at our Embassy in Muscat. That was in 1974. Bill Wolle was our Ambassador.

Q: How did you find conditions when you got there?

ZWEIFEL: Oman had just really started to be a petroleum exporting country, so the place was being transformed before our eyes. But it was still very primitive at the time of our arrival. For example, the only paved road in the country ran essentially from the international airport about 30 miles north of Muscat down to the heart of that capital. If you wanted to go anywhere else, it was a four-wheel drive environment. We were the first occupants of what was then the DCM residence. We lived there during our entire tour without benefit of piped water, paved roads or central air conditioning in an incredibly hot climate. But it was an adventure, fun. We enjoyed it.

Q: What was the attitude towards the United States after the 1973 war?

ZWEIFEL: In Oman, that chapter of the Arab-Israeli conflict was a distant rumble. That far down the Gulf, there was relatively little emotional involvement or, let's face it, political interest. The Omanis were loyal members of the Arab league and supported that organization's positions such as the Arab boycott. But they were not out beating the drums for the cause. So we did not feel the same vibrancy on those issues as you experienced in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon-places closer to the actual confrontation.

Q: What were our main functions, our reasons for being in Oman?

ZWEIFEL: You have to go back to the concept that we held at the time, still do except now it is being constrained by budgetary considerations. U.S. foreign policy was based on universal representation. We wanted to be wherever we were welcomed. We also felt that it was necessary to have a presence where we could in order to forestall forces antithetical to our interests. In short, we did not want the Soviets to move into vacuums. We felt that when we had a diplomatic presence, that would stymie the Soviets. In the case of Oman,

that was the case during my tour there. The Omanis were very conservative in their international political positions and they looked to Washington for guidance and support of various sorts. We had a Peace Corps program in country, and we were building up a modest program of military cooperation. So it was a good relationship.

Q: I guess I wanted to ask a question in that regard. We were equipping the Omani army?

ZWEIFEL: Not really. Our program was more in the realm of training. The Omani army was equipped by the British, and the armed forces commanded by seconded British military officers. The commanders of the army, air force, and navy were all serving British flag officers. The British influence was still dominant in the lower Gulf at that time.

Q: And oil was then coming on stream?

ZWEIFEL: Oil had been discovered almost coincident to the succession to the throne of Sultan Qaboos who, as you may recall, overthrew his father. Petroleum exports began in about 1970, but only began to be a really significant source of income around 1974, the year I arrived in Oman.

Q: Were American oil companies coming in?

ZWEIFEL: American oil companies had been in and out of Oman over the years. Most of what was being done at that time was under the auspices of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), a subsidiary of Shell Oil.

Q: Were there guerrillas there or not?

ZWEIFEL: When we got to Oman there was a low-level guerrilla insurgency in the Shofar region, the southern area of Oman. The group went by the name of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman, PFLO.

Q: What was the extent of Saudi influence, if any, in Oman at the time?

ZWEIFEL: The Saudi influence throughout the Arabian Peninsula was significant because of the economic power they had. The Omanis, however, were a little bit sheltered by geography. Although they are neighbors of Saudi Arabia, the inhospitable Empty Quarter separates the two. Oman historically has been an outward looking, seafaring nation, which once controlled a rather extensive empire including territories along the coasts of East Africa and the Indian Subcontinent. Omanis had developed their own cultural traits and were more independent in their attitudes than some of the states further up in the Persian Gulf.

Q: In 1976, you left Oman and went back to the National War College.

ZWEIFEL: That's right, I came back for a year at the National War College.

Q: I take it you found that invigorating?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, it was very worthwhile and stimulating.

Q: When that year was over, you were assigned to the Department.

ZWEIFEL: I was assigned to be the Deputy on the Egyptian Desk. It was an exciting period in relation to the Middle East. Were you DCM in Tel Aviv at that time?

Q: No, I left just before the Sadat visit and the Camp David negotiations. So I missed all that. I was back in this country at the time. Who was the Director of Egyptian Affairs?

ZWEIFEL: Dan Newberry was there when I joined the office. He was replaced by Charles Marthinsen.

Q: Roy Atherton was still there?

ZWEIFEL: He was Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. A paragon. He did a lot of the heavy lifting as the negotiations went forward.

Q: What were some of the issues you had to deal with at the time?

ZWEIFEL: The predominant issue was the peace negotiation and the Camp David process. The Egyptian Desk played essentially a support role in those efforts. But it was professionally exciting and challenging to be involved in the process in any capacity. It was an opportunity to be on the inside of policy decisions on an important issue at a critical time.

Q: How about our military supply problems with Egypt?

ZWEIFEL: Hermann Eilts was our very able Ambassador to Egypt at the time. After the Camp David negotiations resulted in the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty, one of the payoffs for the Egyptians was a sizable U.S. military assistance program. How well I remember Ambassador Eilts on his frequent trips to Washington. He was a tremendously decisive, dynamic person. He favored the military assistance program, but did not want it to involve a mushrooming of his American staff in Cairo. I remember spending a long day with him at the Pentagon, grappling with the issue of staffing the Military Assistance Program (MAP) office in Cairo. At the end of the day, he reluctantly agreed to allow up to 37 U.S. military personnel to be posted to Egypt for a brief time, after which the number was to drop back down to ten or 15 officers. Of course, that was totally unrealistic. I shudder to think of how many people have been assigned to monitor and manage that program over the years.

Q: Were there any counter-pressures from the Israelis?

ZWEIFEL: Yes and no. The Israelis, being realists and having achieved an important objective of their own, were supportive of a U.S. program that would essentially be a form of compensation for Egypt in return for the step taken, a very bold one in the Arab and Egyptian contexts. So, conceptually, the Israelis did not have much of a problem with the program we undertook with the Egyptians. Now, when it came to the specifics, then, yes, the idea of technological and military superiority of the Israelis was always a given. The Israeli Government was unrelenting in pressing that point. It was understood all the way around that, whatever was done in terms of military assistance for Egypt, this would not give that nation an edge or even the capacity meaningfully to challenge Israel.

Q: What about the F-5s we sent to Egypt? The Israelis have always been very critical of others having modern aircraft.

ZWEIFEL: By that time, as I recall, the Israelis already had the F-14.

Q: They already had the F-15. I was there when they got them.

ZWEIFEL: It was a quantum jump forward for the Egyptians, but it was certainly not something that would match what the Israelis already had in their arsenal. I think that typifies what I said about the terms under which our military assistance program for Egypt was being crafted.

Q: Were we critical of Sadat's crackdown on his opponents or not? He came out very hard on them, I think.

ZWEIFEL: No. We were not exactly thrilled with the idea of some of the oppressive measures he adopted against the Muslim Brotherhood. But our larger interests prevailed. We, and I believe others, understood those interests to be in the continuing commitment to the Peace Treaty and the undertakings that the Egyptians had made at the time of Camp David. We felt that those commitments were closely tied to Sadat's force as a person and to his continued leadership. The real test of those commitments came at the time of Sadat's assassination in 1981.

Q: You had left the Desk by that time and in 1979, you moved back to Amman.

ZWEIFEL: Yes, I went back to Jordan.

Q: And this time as DCM.

ZWEIFEL: Nick Veliotis, who had been the Deputy Assistant Secretary with overall responsibility for Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel, invited me to be his DCM. He had gone to Jordan about a year before I was due for transfer, but the assignment was already

set. Despite the fact that we had experienced a pretty difficult time during our first tour in Jordan, my wife and I were delighted with the prospect of going back since we had come to appreciate the country and the Jordanian people very much.

Q: You and the Ambassador divided the work. Did he use you as an alter ego? Were there certain fields that he wanted you to handle?

ZWEIFEL: Yes and no. Nick was a tremendously gifted leader. He knew what he wanted and was most capable in doing his job. At the same time, he gave those around him a lot of space. During the first part of our tour together, our working relationships followed the classic inside-outside pattern, found so often between an Ambassador and the DCM. At the same time, Nick was never jealous of his prerogatives. He wanted me to be involved in all aspects of the front office work, including contacts with upper echelon Jordanians.

He was quite insistent that we arrive in Amman at the end of June, in time for the Fourth of July commemoration just before the beginning of Ramadan that year. This would be the opportunity to present us to the leading lights of the local community. As it turned out, the occasion was more like a homecoming for us, since so many of the guests were people we had known during our earlier tour in Jordan.

Nick and I worked together in Jordan for about eight months or so, not an extended period of time. Then he was called back to Washington to become Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs. Thereafter, I was Chargé, for about the next fourteen months.

Personally, it was perhaps the most professionally challenging and satisfying time in my entire career. The high profile attention given to policy issues which were our daily fare gave me a tremendous insight into the events and developments, and I felt that I was playing a significant role in the process.

Q: It was a great opportunity for you, I think. What was the size of the post at that time?

ZWEIFEL: I suppose there were about 100-120 American employees. We had a full range of agencies and departments represented. There were sizable AID and military assistance programs; USIS and other agencies had personnel stationed in Jordan. It was a broad gauged Mission.

Q: How about the Peace Corps, any of them out there?

ZWEIFEL: No. There were Peace Corps Volunteers in other countries in which I served, but not in Jordan.

Q: What is the role of the Christian Arabs in Jordan? Do they play any role at all?

ZWEIFEL: They are small in number, by and large engaged in business and the professions such as medicine, law, etc. There are few Christians in government, though not as a result of conscious discrimination or public policy. Christians are permitted to worship openly, to have their churches, etc. They are not subject to persecution by the predominant Muslim population. The Christian community is also clustered in certain villages such as Karak near Mount Nebo, the site of Moses burial. That community traces its religious roots very far into the past.

Q: They were mostly Palestinians were they?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, although as I have noted, some communities have lived in Jordan almost since the time of Christ.

Q: We were sending military equipment to Jordan at that time, were we not?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, we had a long-standing program of military cooperation, both in terms of training and equipment sales and support.

Q: And there were occasions when the Syrians had mobilized at the border?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, in a less friendly way than was the case in late 1970. Ten years later, Syrian President Assad faced considerable internal opposition from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Syrian Government, perhaps with some justification, accused the Jordanians of supporting the Brotherhood's actions against Assad. So, it was a tense time in Jordanian-Syrian relations. This, coincidentally, led to a rapprochement between Amman and Baghdad. Historically, there has been something of a triangular relationship among those three states. Each of the three governments has, from time to time, sought to play a two against one game, and Jordan often has been the swing vote in that political minuet.

Q: I see. "Your enemy makes me your friend." What were relations between the King and the Palestinian PLO at this time?

ZWEIFEL: By the end of the decade of the 70s, there had been a reconciliation. The King met on a reasonably frequent basis with Arafat. The PLO had been restored to grace within Arab ranks. But there were clearly understood limits. Most importantly, the PLO and other, more radical and militant Palestinian groups were not permitted to launch operations against Israel from Jordanian-controlled territory. The lessons of 1970 in that respect were still fresh in mind. So, the relationships between the King and the Palestinians were carefully calibrated, focused on political and social issues.

Q: In other words, they weren't shooting at each other?

ZWEIFEL: Military cooperation and support were not part of the relationship. Significant from our policy interests, the Jordanian-Israeli front was completely quiet, no cross-

border raids or operations. That was in marked contrast with what was going on along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

Q: In 1981, you were appointed as Ambassador.

ZWEIFEL: I was appointed to be Ambassador to the Yemen Arab Republic.

Q: When and how did you learn of this appointment?

ZWEIFEL: During the Reagan Administration, one of the nice touches was that the President always made personal calls to people he wished to appoint to Missions or other presidential appointment positions. So, at a certain point in time-I by then knew I was the Department's choice for the position-the call came through and President Reagan personally asked me if I would agree to be his representative in Sanaa. By the time such calls came, a prospective candidate would have to be completely out of the loop if he or she didn't expect the call and have a positive response ready!

Q: How did your confirmation hearings go? Were they smooth?

ZWEIFEL: They were fine. I was one of five nominees, all slated to go to embassies in the Arab World. Dick Murphy was going out as Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Bob Paganelli to Damascus, Mike Newlin to Algiers, Joseph Verner Reed to Morocco, and myself, to Yemen. The hearings were held the day after the announcement that we would sell AWACS (airborne radar detection platforms) to the Saudis. That was politically controversial, and the questioning focused on the proposed sale. Dick Murphy was in the spot light. Questions put to the rest of us were, more or less, along the lines of "How will an AWACS sale affect our relations with the country to which you are going?"

Q: What was the status of our relations with North Yemen at the time of your appointment?

ZWEIFEL: It was an interesting relationship in several respects. We had talked about the role of the Soviets in relation to other posts at which I served. The Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), or South Yemen was under Communist rule; we did not have diplomatic relations with the regime in Aden. Contrarily, North Yemen to which I was accredited had a nominally more western-oriented government. In reality, the Soviets had considerable influence in Sanaa, were there in large numbers and were well positioned politically. It was an almost unique situation in some respects. We had sold the Yemenis F-5 fighter aircraft and had a Military Assistance Program, which included training and support for the F-5s, provided in some cases by uniformed U.S. Air Force personnel. At the other end of the selfsame hanger where the F-5s were serviced, Soviet military personnel were helping the Yemenis with MiG-19s, the other fighter aircraft in their inventory. It was head-to-head competition between ourselves and the Soviets.

Another aspect, both interesting and frustrating, was that Yemen always lived in the shadow of the Saudis in terms of our political interests and attentions. The Yemenis were sometimes difficult for us to deal with. That was doubly so as they related to their richer Arab neighbors. Many of the laborers in Saudi Arabia were Yemenis. They were good workers, and repatriation of their earnings was a mainstay of the Yemeni economy. Despite this dependence, the Yemenis chaffed at the Saudi predominance in the region. After all, Yemen was a land of settled agriculturists at a time when the Saudis were poor nomads wandering the desert. The Yemenis felt with justification that they had a history of real civilization, more than just the traditions of wandering tribes. But the economic power and, by extension, political and military clout was now that of the Saudi upstarts. For their part, the Saudis were always wary of Yemen. Historically, the Yemen had always been a sort of Achilles Heel for the Saudis. In order to counterbalance the Saudi predominance, the Yemenis curried favor with the Iraqis and other more radical Arab governments.

For our own geopolitical and economic reasons, we always favored the Saudis, and this often put us implicitly a bit at odds with the government in Sanaa. The Yemenis had to content themselves with the leftovers in terms of our resources and attention.

Q: Did we attempt to do anything to further a merger between the two Yemens?

ZWEIFEL: At the time, a unified Yemen was a distant thought, almost inconceivable. A guerrilla insurgency in the southern part of the Yemen Arab Republic, aided and abetted from the regime in Aden, actively sought the ouster of government in Sanaa. Far from fostering union between the two countries, our objective was to ensure that the government of Ali Abdullah Saleh in Sanaa would be able to sustain its independent position.

Q: You've outlined some of your concerns. Do you have anything else?

ZWEIFEL: One of the more interesting and delicate issues which arose during my time in Yemen grew out of the denouement of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. At the end of that chapter of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the U.S. actively participated in the safe evacuation of Palestinian fighters from Beirut. By extension, we undertook to find countries which would accept the evacuees.

In that connection, I was instructed to approach the government in Sanaa. This came at a time when I had been in Yemen for almost two years. I had come from Jordan where Arab-Israeli issues were the all-consuming topic of conversation. By contrast, these matters did not arise in normal conversation with Yemenis. Even when in political dialogue with government officials, Arab-Israeli developments were only broached if I brought up the subject. So, when it came time for the Yemenis to come to grips with our request on behalf of the displaced Palestinians, it was a novel idea, an unusual role for us to be playing. The Saleh Government eventually agreed, and 700-800 fighters and their families were relocated to Yemen. There, despite their Arab affinities, common culture

and language, they experienced one of the worst cases of cultural shock imaginable. The Palestinians were thrust at neck-breaking speed back into the 14th century conditions which prevailed in much of Yemen. The culture was as alien to them as it was to us.

Q: I find it interesting that you mentioned that because, over 40 years ago, I was talking to our mutual friend, the late Bob Houghton, who told me that when he had been in Saudi Arabia, he and his Ambassador once made a flight into Yemen. This would have been in the late 40s, early 50s. He said, "Tom, I have never been in the 14th Century before, but I was on that trip." Who was your DCM during that period?

ZWEIFEL: My first DCM was Ron Neumann, who is now our Ambassador to Algeria. Then I asked Allen Keiswetter to come over from Khartoum to become DCM.

Q: Were they both Arabists?

ZWEIFEL: Ron had spent a good part of his career in the Arab world, compensating in experience for his only modest achievements in the language. He did not have the advantage of FSI Arabic language training. Alan's Arabic was a bit stronger. He also had served in that part of the world, so he had some familiarity with the culture and the issues.

When I was preparing to go to Yemen, the DCM position was vacant. A middle-grade political officer had been Charge for some time. I made a conscious decision that such a dual vacancy should not again occur when it came time for me to depart post. So, at the outset, I told Ron Neumann that I wanted him in the job for two years; then there would be a change in order to ensure an overlap in one of the top two positions. That was the pattern that followed. I don't know whether it was ultimately the best solution, but I felt strongly on the issue at the time.

Q: How big was your staff?

ZWEIFEL: We had about 70 Americans, not counting Peace Corps Volunteers. There were about eighty of them in country at any given time. As in Jordan, representatives of a fairly full range of agencies and departments were attached to the Mission. It was a good mixture.

Q: How many other resident embassies were in a place like Sanaa?

ZWEIFEL: As I recall, there were about 35 resident embassies. Nearly all of the Arab League governments were represented. There were a few Western European embassies, and even more from the Soviet Bloc. The Chinese, Indians, Iranians, and Pakistanis rounded out the Corps. It was not large.

Q: I presume other Ambassadors would come in who were accredited there from abroad at times?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, there were quite a few who were resident in Jeddah or Riyadh.

Q: Were there any terrorist dangers while you were there? Did you feel safe or secure?

ZWEIFEL: Yemen was a chaotic place. There were always people shooting at each other or getting shot at. One of the events I often recount to illustrate this point occurred shortly after my arrival in Yemen. It involved a couple of Chinese prison laborers; such workers, brought probably against their own will, were carrying out most of the construction in Sanaa.

One day, an unidentified member of the Yemeni security forces-I am not sure which branch he was affiliated with-took a liking to the Mao suit of one of the Chinese workers. He wanted it. There wasn't much communication between this Arabic-speaking official and the worker who spoke only Chinese. When it became apparent that the Chinaman was not going to give up his suit, there ensued a feeble attempt by the Yemeni to buy it. These efforts were likewise hampered by lack of communication. Finally, the worker turned to walk away. The Yemeni did the only thing he could under the circumstances: he drew out his weapon and shot the Chinaman. The bullet caught a second Chinese worker as well, so there were enough Mao suits to go around!

My Chinese counterpart was outraged by the deaths. He proceeded to raise it to the level of a modest diplomatic crisis. About a week later, I went to call on the Prime Minister, Abdul Karim al-Iryani. The Prime Minister was a highly educated, very intelligent man. He was so westernized that I do not recall ever seeing him other than in a western suit. He had attended Yale, spoke impeccable English. He was an excellent and well informed interlocutor.

We had finished discussing our business when he brought up the subject of the murder of the Chinese workers. He commented "This Chinese thing is getting out of hand. The Chinese Ambassador keeps raising the subject." Of course, by then the Yemeni authorities had identified the perpetrator, had him in custody. Al-Iryani continued, "I told the Ambassador I would bring the murderer in front on him and have him executed, but he did not want that."

I have always thought it was the quintessence of the inscrutable east meeting the inscrutable east.

Q: I was afraid you were going to say that when you saw the Prime Minister, he was wearing a Mao suit!

ZWEIFEL: Two members of the Mission staff were shot during my time in Yemen. These were not terrorist actions, nor of any tremendous consequence. But the incidents did underscore the always tenuous security situation in the country.

The first to get hit was a Public Affairs Trainee, a junior USIS officer. He was speeding down the highway one day, going to Taiz from Sanaa. On the way, he passed a scruffy looking man by the side of the road, lugging a weapon longer than he was tall. That was hardly an unusual sight in Yemen where every able-bodied male over the age of ten usually was armed in some way. As the trainee whizzed past, the man motioned to him. Our officer just assumed it was a hitchhiker, so he kept on going. As it turned out, the armed man was a soldier, setting up a roadblock so the President's motorcade could come by. He leveled his weapon and let loose a couple of rounds. One bullet came up through the gas tank of the car and landed in our trainee's rear end. No serious damage, but a good scare.

The other shooting incident involved the AID Director who, with his family, was visiting a very remote area in the northern part of the country. They were traveling in an official vehicle with a local employee as driver. On the way back down from their destination, they were following another vehicle, apparently full of German tourists, across the essentially trackless gravel plain. The first vehicle pulled off to the side and stopped. Our AID officer and his party pulled around and kept going.

As it turned out, the first vehicle had been stopped by tribal bandits who gave chase. They caught up with the AID vehicle and clearly intended to commandeer it as well. Well, in the discussion which ensued, one of the young carjacker's weapon discharged. The bullet caught the AID Director in the Achilles Tendon. Once the bandits realized what had happened, they let the Director get back in his vehicle and the driver took him to the nearest hospital for treatment. It was a very painful wound, eventually necessitating medical evacuation. Yemen was that sort of place-the wild east!

Q: In other words, it wasn't organized terrorism.

ZWEIFEL: Tribal warfare, what have you.

Q: Were you able to move about the country as Ambassador?

ZWEIFEL: I moved around a lot. When I first got there, the insurrection in the south made it inadvisable to go into certain areas in that part of the country. But after it quieted down, I even went into that region. Almost all my travel was done via four-wheel drive vehicle because most of the country is very primitive, poorly served by any sort of infrastructure. To my knowledge, only four Foreign Service Officers have served in both Oman and Yemen. Both were places in which the old Arabian culture was preserved- perhaps because both were historically poor, did not have the means to modernize which so often implies the discarding of old ways and the razing of old buildings, etc. I am proud to have been one of those four who served in both countries at times when they were still relatively unspoiled.

Q: Were you much in demand as Ambassador to speak or take part in events, to open various events?

ZWEIFEL: There was a reasonable amount of such activity. Dedication of Peace Corps projects, for example. And there were the usual ceremonial things that you always had to show up for. In both Oman and Yemen, custom required that, whenever the head of state went out of the country, you had to see him off at the airport. Ditto when he returned. A lot of time spent milling around tarmacs. There were a number of occasions in which, as Ambassador, I was called on to speak, probably less than during my tour in Oman and certainly a magnitude less than when I was DCM and Charge in Jordan.

Q: Any other comments you'd like to make about your time in Yemen or not?

ZWEIFEL: In our career, we always aspire to be appointed as an Ambassador. It is the pinnacle of a career. However, looking back on it, the Yemen experience did not rank among the most challenging and certainly not even the most enjoyable of my career. There were other assignments that gave me a great deal more personal and professional satisfaction.

Q: I think one has to be in the Service to understand that. At the end of your three years as Ambassador, you came back to the Department and became Director of North African Affairs. Did North African Affairs include Egypt at the time?

ZWEIFEL: No, Egypt was still under a separate country directorate at that time. North African Affairs encompassed Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. The latter was a unique case because, as was so in relation to Cuba and Iran and later with Iraq, the measure of our success was to a degree in how bad the relationship was. Qadhafi was a nemesis-then as now-and the worse the relationship, the better your record.

Q: I'm sure Libya was your biggest problem in that period.

ZWEIFEL: Libya took up a lot of my time and attention. Morocco and Tunisia, where we had excellent and constructive relations with both large economic and military assistance programs, also were major interests.

Q: Did you get to travel to the area?

ZWEIFEL: I traveled a number of times to the area.

Q: Did we have anyone representing our interests in Libya?

ZWEIFEL: The Belgians were our protecting power in Tripoli. There was no Interests Section-that is, there were no official Americans in Libya.

Q: It was during that period that Libya and Morocco made a treaty of union, which must have surprised us.

ZWEIFEL: The so-called Treaty of Oujda was indeed an unpleasant surprise. We felt misled, if not betrayed, by King Hassan, a close ally who knew fully of our strong opposition to Qadhafi because of the latter's support for and involvement in international terrorism. At the same time, it was a foregone conclusion that the union between Morocco and Libya would be of little substance and of short duration.

Q: What was the reason they did that?

ZWEIFEL: I would not presume to give an authoritative answer. Certainly, in part, it was related to the Polisario resistance movement which was contesting King Hassan's control of the Western Sahara. Hassan was, in a sense, seeking to put indirect pressure on the Benjedid government in Algiers. The Algerians were the primary source of support for the Polisario, and the King probably perceived that his treaty with Qadhafi would force the Algerians to shift resources, split their attention to two fronts. In that respect, the union with Libya may have been something of a balancing act. But it was ill-conceived, doomed to failure. At the end of the day, Qadhafi was not any more a reliable ally for the King than he had proven to be for any other erstwhile seekers of accommodation with the Libyan regime.

Q: We were making military sales to Algeria, were we not, at the time?

ZWEIFEL: No. We had sizable military programs with Morocco and Tunisia, but such cooperation with Algeria was still in the offing. After Benjedid's state visit to Washington in 1985, we began a very modest military training program with Algeria.

Q: The Algerian president, Benjedid, paid a visit here?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, Benjedid made a very successful visit to Washington, the first by an Algerian head of state. Of course, King Hassan came here regularly. For example, the King was the first to make a state visit after President Reagan came into office. Planning for visits by the King—a number of which were aborted for one reason or another—was a standard item on the agenda of any Director of North African Affairs. Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba was also a frequent visitor. He made his last visit to Washington during my tenure in that job.

Q: Of course it was during this period that a man who is now in the news again, Mr. Farrakhan, accepted some money from Qadhafi. Did that cause any problems for you?

ZWEIFEL: The turning point in our problems with Qadhafi during that time was the bombing of the night club in Berlin which resulted in the death of U.S. Servicemen. We were convinced that the Libyans were behind that terrorist incident. As a result, we imposed tight economic sanctions in January, 1986. The problems continued to escalate and culminated in our bombing of Tripoli in April of that year.

Terrorism and Qadhafi's support for such actions was among our major foreign policy concerns and continues to be so. There were also related tensions with some of our allies. The Italians, and to a lesser extent the Germans and others, have such extensive business and commercial interests in and with Libya that those governments tend to be less harsh than we are in judging Qadhafi.

Q: Yes, that's with Iran and Iraq today. It's the same thing. Was the bombing of Tripoli in response to a recommendation by the State Department?

ZWEIFEL: I would rather not comment on that specific issue.

Q: All right. It certainly taught us to exact Qadhafi's attention though.

ZWEIFEL: The bombing got Qadhafi's attention all right. I believe it toned him down for a considerable period of time, but it hardly dissuaded him from his support for terrorism. Subsequently, he revived his involvement in the conflict in Chad. Then there was the explosion of PanAm 103 over Scotland. He has not really reformed.

Q: The Soviets were supplying him with missiles at the time, too, an obvious concern to us.

ZWEIFEL: Yes. And our assessment was that he was determined to use such weapons. Our intelligence was that the Libyans were working to develop chemical weapons as well. That would pose an even greater danger.

Our opposition to Qadhafi has been very long standing, almost from the outset of his regime in 1969. It is ironic to note that he has seen American Presidents come and go over the intervening years. He has survived in power even though every administration in Washington, without regard to the party in power, has considered him a nemesis and wished for his departure from the world scene.

Going back to my time working on Egyptian Affairs, the Egyptians, too, saw Qadhafi as a threat, a challenge. There was a sort of dance between Washington and Cairo when it came to the question of how to deal with Qadhafi. We thought it was time to move against him, the Egyptians counseled against it-and vice versa. In the summer of 1969, Sadat perceived that the time was ripe, that Qadhafi was under so much internal opposition and pressure that a small effort from Egypt would topple his regime.

But, as the lesson later was learned again when Iraq invaded Iran, the minute the outside power entered to deliver a coup de gras, the nationals of the country came to the defense of the beleaguered leader-"our king, right or wrong", "rally round the flag". Qadhafi not only survived the Egyptian invasion, but managed to turn it to his advantage and strengthen his position within Libya. The lesson I derive is that outside powers cannot dictate other people's governments, even if the motive is to relieve them of oppressive or evil regimes.

Q: In many ways there seems to be a parallel with Fidel Castro.

ZWEIFEL: That's right. In a certain sense, I would say that the nationals of any country generally get the government they want or deserve.

Q: What was the U.S. position with regard to the Polisario guerrillas?

ZWEIFEL: I would describe it as ambivalent. In one respect, our policy supported the concept of self-determination and respect for the results of referenda such as that sought by the Polisario. The UN was and is actively involved in such an effort in regard to the disputed Western Sahara. On the other hand, we long have perceived that the Western Sahara would not be a viable unit in terms of its economic potential, sparse population. I would note that this aspect is hardly a standard we have applied elsewhere; we recognize objectively non-viable political entities around the world. Finally, our long association with King Hassan was the driving factor. It is no secret that we have tilted very consciously towards Morocco's position on the Western Sahara and that we would be very reluctant to see the King's hand forced on the Polisario issue.

Q: You mentioned earlier the economic sanctions we'd taken against Libya. We were at that time, I believe, encouraging or pressuring other countries to try to get them to do the same thing?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, indeed, and we have done so consistently ever since, although with only mixed success. If you move forward in time, to the Bush Administration and the Gulf War, we were able to really mobilize an international consensus on such an issue. We were never quite as successful in doing that vis a vis Libya, despite the general recognition of the fact that Qadhafi was behind much of the international terrorism. How do you explain that? I don't know. I believe that much comes down to a political cynicism on the part of some of other governments, giving priority to economic and commercial advantages. Another personal observation, if you will permit it: in my view, economic sanctions have not been ultimately successful in bringing about changes in governments or even in pernicious policies. There have been a few exceptions, but successes have been rare.

Q: What you're saying is that governments, like people, see what they want to see?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, and each acts in their own self-interest.

Q: Libya had some trouble with its neighbor, Tunisia, at this time, too. Were we backing Tunisia?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. Again, our standard in regard to Libya was "whatever Qadhafi is trying to do, we will oppose. If this means support for another government, whatever that government might be, we will back it." At the time, for example, both our relations and

those of Qadhafi with the government in the Sudan were problematic. Nonetheless, if developments were in a phase in which Qadhafi sought to curry favor in Khartoum, we didn't like it. If the Libyans threatened the Sudan-as was the case on occasion-we would come to the defense of the Sudan. It was, again, a case of "the friend of my enemy is my enemy, the enemy of my enemy is my friend."

Q: What was the part of the American oil companies under these sanctions we'd taken against Libya?

ZWEIFEL: The oil companies, especially CONOCO, took a hit. The petroleum interests in general argued that sanctions only harmed our own, American, commercial interests over the longer term. Their position was that, despite our determination not to allow trade, we could not assume that the competition would abide by our policy. If a competing, foreign oil company establishes a position and, subsequently, there is a change in government, we will have lost out. For such reasons, the American oil companies would have preferred to maintain positions in Libya.

Q: I assume you heard that in your position there?

ZWEIFEL: Yes.

Q: What can you say about the reprimand that had to be given to our Ambassador to the Vatican when he met with Libyan officials?

ZWEIFEL: I can only say what a loose cannon he was to free-wheel like that. I think it points to one of the things that we discussed over lunch: some of the choices for envoys are made for the wrong reasons. The result is appointment of some who are eager, but inept. It is not so bad when they then rely on competent professionals to carry the workload. But on occasion, as that of Ambassador Wilson, the man under discussion, the appointees may not only be inept but also misguided into thinking they have the authority to flaunt policies with which they disagree. Through their energy and pro-active undertakings, they can lead us down some pretty disastrous paths.

Q: He'd been a personal friend of President Reagan s.

ZWEIFEL: That's right.

Q: That went a little too far, a meeting with the Libyans.

ZWEIFEL: It did.

Q: Then we come to these fire fights in the Gulf of Sidra. What do you say about them?

ZWEIFEL: It was an unequal military contest. By that time, we felt that we had every reason to sort of take on Qadhafi. Plus, we were trying to establish and sustain a very

important concept of freedom of navigation in international waters. So, we wanted clearly to contest Qadhafi's contention that the Gulf of Sidra was a closed bay, which would have meant that naval vessels would not have been permitted to transit or cross through those waters without prior notification to the Libyans.

So, we decided that a direct challenge on the issue was essential. Of course, when we moved the Sixth Fleet into the area Qadhafi claimed as under Libyan sovereignty, we did so on the assumption that it would evoke a military response from the Libyans. We were equally confident that we would be able to establish our military position without any particular difficulty. That was, indeed, the case. From Qadhafi's point of view, I suppose he felt constrained to make the quixotic challenge and to accept the defeat when it came. It was an ignominious event for the Libyans.

Q: What about our allies? We had some strains with them at that time.

ZWEIFEL: There were some strains. The Spanish were not particularly thrilled with the overflights of the aircraft used in our attack on Tripoli. As was the case and continues to be so even now, when a decision is made to take such military action there will always be those who are timid in anticipation that the action will either go wrong or escalate into something even more dangerous, threaten to get out of control. So they counsel caution from that point of view as well as for more self-serving reasons.

In the event under discussion, our response was both calibrated and ultimately effective. The nay-sayers and nervous Nellies were ignored and fell silent. But that does not negate the fact that there were those who sincerely questioned the wisdom of our actions.

Q: What was the reaction throughout the Arab World?

ZWEIFEL: There has always been ambivalence in regard to the pariah regimes in the region, whether you are talking about Libya, Sudan, Iraq. Inevitably, there is a certain pan-Arab sentiment, a propensity to be supportive of a fellow Arab leader. And yet, you end up in many of these instances with governments which are willing, ultimately, to acknowledge the validity of our position. A number of Arab governments-some of which had been targeted by Qadhafi over time-agreed that he was and is a purveyor of terrorism and therefore should be dealt with in stern fashion. A more recent instance of these attitudes was seen in relation to Saddam Hussein at the time of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Not surprisingly, you end up with a certain shading of the points. There often is at least muted criticism of our position, less frequently open support when the object of our wrath is an Arab leader or government. But, underneath it all, an acquiescence, sometimes even relief, is apparent.

Q: Did Arab Ambassadors in Washington come in to complain about our actions?

ZWEIFEL: In my recollection, not too many did so. For instance, both the Algerians and Tunisians were embroiled in their own disputes with Qadhafi at the time, so those governments took at least quiet satisfaction in the fact that he was getting his comeuppance. As I noted, there was considerable ambivalence.

Q: We did send Ambassador Walters, I gather, over to visit several of the allies to assuage them. Did you travel with him?

ZWEIFEL: Not on that trip. I traveled with him on other occasions, but in this instance, I was fully occupied directing the Department's Operations Center Task Force which had been set up to handle the crisis.

Q: It was at that time that the Department's Press Spokesman, Bernie Kalb, resigned because of what he said he thought was our "disinformation campaign". I certainly hope you weren't involved in the disinformation. In 1987, after those exciting years in North African Affairs, you moved across the ocean to direct Caribbean Affairs.

ZWEIFEL: Yes, that was the revival of my Latin American regional emphasis.

Q: Did you request this assignment?

ZWEIFEL: I had decided that I wanted to stay in Washington a bit longer. It was also a case of the jobs that were available at my grade. I was pleased to get the assignment. It was a good one, and I enjoyed it. I had never focused on the Caribbean prior to that time. The job had some issues of policy importance and high level attention, primarily relating to developments in Haiti. To a lesser extent, matters such as the lingering aftermath of the Grenada episode made up the day to day agenda of issues of interest. It was a busy and challenging job.

Q: I imagine drug interdiction was one of your biggest?

ZWEIFEL: Narcotics interdiction loomed large, especially if you were looking at countries such as The Bahamas where that was the issue, overshadowing all else. These problems were also of major concern in places such as Jamaica and elsewhere in the Caribbean. But in the case of The Bahamas, it was a burning issue.

Q: It's just a hop, skip, and jump to Florida from there.

ZWEIFEL: It is almost impossible to completely monitor the small aircraft that move throughout that archipelago.

Q: Could we regard the Caribbean Basin Initiative as a success? That was launched when I was in the USOAS with some fanfare.

ZWEIFEL: Yes, I think it was. Now, it has been far overshadowed by NAFTA. Certainly the idea of fostering that sort of economic development as opposed to just providing budget support or grant aid was the way to go. Measured by the increase in trade and commerce among and between the countries of the Caribbean alone, the CBI should be judged a success.

Q: What about the idea of a Caribbean free trade zone? Is that still around?

ZWEIFEL: I have not followed developments closely to date. But the concept of a free trade zone has always appealed to some of the governments in the area. That of Trinidad and Tobago, for example, always favored this approach. Historically, these efforts have been hampered by the fact that the economies of the region were and are more supplementary than complementary. They essentially produce the same items, compete against each other for markets. So the concept of a regional free trade area is, in my estimation, a more romantic concept than a realistic option.

Q: Did you work with the OAS?

ZWEIFEL: In a lateral way, yes, mostly in the course of dealing with the recurrent crises in Haiti. For example, we sent an election observation team to Haiti under OAS auspices in 1987. Our team was headed by Brian Atwood, now AID Administrator. That was the sort of interaction we had with the OAS.

Q: Did you get to visit the region?

ZWEIFEL: I went to the Caribbean on a number of occasions. One aspect about traveling in that area is that you get to see a lot of Miami, since it is the transportation hub for the region. Then Assistant Secretary for American Republic Affairs (ARA) Elliott Abrams used to joke that Miami was his favorite city in Latin America.

Q: In 1989, at the end of your tour in Caribbean Affairs, you moved over to become a Senior Inspector.

ZWEIFEL: I led inspection teams for almost three years.

Q: Did you inspect abroad or in the Department or both?

ZWEIFEL: Both. My first inspection cycle was to three countries in Eastern Europe, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. It was a fascinating experience. This was in the fall of 1989 when things were starting to change rapidly in that region. It was instructive in more ways than one.

The Department had just sent a sort of round robin cable to posts in the region, essentially asking what if questions. Perhaps because we are most comfortable with the status quo, no matter what that is, the answers from each embassy were along the same lines. Mind

you, each of those posts was staffed with experienced professionals, specialists in the area.

Our Embassy in Bucharest replied along the lines of whatever happens elsewhere, Ceausescu is so mean and his intelligence system so pervasive that he would ruthlessly crush any opposition. That would be the end of it . By Christmas Day, less than three months later, Ceausescu was executed.

We arrived in Sofia on October Revolution Day, November 8. That Embassy had reported that Zhivkov vowed he would remain in power until he reached age 94-noting wryly that his older brother was already 98. In other words, the Embassy's analysis was Zhivkov is here to stay. The first weekend we were in Bulgaria, we took a trip up country to relax. By the time we got back to Sofia on Saturday evening, Zhivkov had been deposed, imprisoned.

In Yugoslavia it was much the same story. I remember Ambassador Warren Zimmermann telling me that the fractiousness that I perceived was not of great concern, that the Yugoslavs are always at each other's throats; they will work things out.

Q: So much for predictions in the Foreign Service! What do you think the chief value of inspections these days?

ZWEIFEL: As a management tool, inspections should be a tool of exceptional value. Contrary to the perceptions of some, inspectors do not go out with the goal of making people slavishly do things in order to make the right checks in boxes on a form. Rather, the inspection should be perceived as an opportunity to take a dispassionate view of how the inspected unit understands and carries out its mission. Of increasing importance, the inspectors can reach balanced conclusions concerning the effectiveness of the inspected unit's use of personnel and material resources.

The problem with the inspection process has always been that the implementation phase is not one in which there is an ability to just dictate that something be done. Compliance with inspectors recommendations has to be worked back and forth. As implementation moves forward, there is often so much compromise that the results are mushy. No matter how objective and carefully drawn the recommendations may be, they are always open to a certain amount of interpretation.

When I was in the Inspection Corps, we were still operating under the mandate to inspect every post at least once in any five-year period, preferably more frequently. Now resource constraints have pushed that concept aside. It is entirely possible now for a post to go six or seven years without being inspected, by which time you may have had two or three turnovers at the management level. Who is then to be held accountable for problems or bad practices which may have arisen? I regret this, believe that it is something which will come back to haunt the foreign policy effectiveness of the government. Accountability is being foregone.

Q: After your experience in the Inspection Corps, you moved again into the personnel field.

ZWEIFEL: I was in charge of the Senior Officer Division

Q: 1992 to 1993, I believe?

ZWEIFEL: Yes, during the latter part of the Bush Administration and the beginning of the Clinton Administration.

Q: What were your problems there?

ZWEIFEL: It was an interesting contrast, first of all. The Bush White House was very well organized in managing presidential appointments. Chase Untermeyer was in charge of that work at the White House. There would be meetings at which it was made clear which positions were going to be filled by political appointees. The others were essentially turned over to the Department to come up with the best qualified career candidate for the job. It was a very orderly process in that sense, and the Department did not have to spend time putting forward candidates who had no chance of getting the nod from the White House. Contrarily, for those positions turned over to the Department, the candidate selected invariably was approved by the White House.

Q: Could the Department object to some decision made by the White House? Let's say the White House decided they wanted to send a political appointee to Tel Aviv. Could the Secretary of State come back and say, "No, I think that should be a career appointment?"

ZWEIFEL: The Secretary, in my experience, succeeded in making such arguments on a couple of occasions. Those sorts of discussions were the substance of the joint, preliminary meetings I alluded to. But once the decisions were made, the process went forward.

Q: You didn't want to overdo it, but it could be done?

ZWEIFEL: Right. One case that comes to mind was Saudi Arabia, where the Department ultimately lost the argument. The Secretary felt very strongly in favor of a career candidate. Ultimately, the post went to a political appointee. But in part that was because the Saudis by then had come full circle from earlier times and now actively preferred a non-career American Ambassador.

Q: However, the President's (nominee) would be fine?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. I've often noted that in the case of Israel, there is often a preference (on the part of the Israeli government) for a career person who they could just sort of ignore

as they handled the political relationship directly with the White House and the Congress without too much interference from the State Department.

Q: The Israelis want their policy to be handled in Washington, not in Tel Aviv?

ZWEIFEL: Yes.

Q: So they re happy to have career men there in general.

ZWEIFEL: Yes. And we have had some very distinguished and able diplomats serve there as Ambassador. The Clinton White House was less well-organized. I worked on, as I recall, 104 of the early Clinton foreign policy appointees, primarily Chiefs of Mission, some for other positions. The White House Office of Personnel did not decide until very late whether they wanted to appoint a non-career or a career person to a position. One of the functions I did was to write up the rationale for assignment of candidates under consideration for a particular position. During the Clinton period, I did so for political appointees as well as career candidates. I remember one case in which the White House put up three non-career candidates for the same position!

Under both of those Presidents, there was at least lip service given to the concept that there should be a predominance of career appointees to head diplomatic missions—at least in terms of numbers. Of course when one looks at the posts involved, the balance was not just that of numbers.

The Clinton White House was especially keen on diversity issues. That was good in one sense. At the same time, the results were sometimes almost perverse. Some of the Service's ablest diversity officers, whether they are members of an ethnic minority or women officers, were pushed ahead faster than it would be in their own advantage. In short, they have been placed in positions for which they are not yet fully prepared by experience.

Q: Not always successfully.

ZWEIFEL: Exactly. Some appointments were and are made based on political considerations rather than merit. That is ultimately damaging to a career which has prided itself on being a meritocracy.

Q: One of the problems that, undoubtedly, you had to wrestle with was the surplus of Senior Officers.

ZWEIFEL: Indeed. During the year I was in that job, after the promotion list came out, there were 885 officers in the ranks of FE-OC through Career Ambassador. Then the Congress mandated a successive reduction in numbers. Those lower levels have been met through attrition, strict application of the Time in Class (TIC) rules, etc. But with the

concomitant downsizing of the Department, we still have more Senior Officers than really good positions for them.

One of the things that I fought very hard for was the idea that, if you had a vacant senior officer position, you assigned a senior to that job. That caused some real heartburn on occasion—for example, insisting on the assignment of an FE-OC to an appropriately ranked Political Counselor's position against the wishes of the Embassy, supported by the Bureau, which wanted to stretch an FE-01 into the job. We held the line. The officer who was eventually designated (i.e., a forced assignment) fought the decision all the way. He did not want it, thought he should be sent out as DCM. But the truth of the matter was that he had no chance for the assignment of his choice, so we were able to prevail.

I also pushed very vigorously to assign Senior Officers to positions they had disdained for so long, jobs that frequently were performed by WAE retirees, such as document declassification. In my view, if the Seniors in question were otherwise unassigned, they should be disciplined enough to work where needed.

Q: And accepting their salaries.

ZWEIFEL: Yes. This was also a way to enable the Department to economize, save on hard-pressed personnel expenses. But it was a painful process. It did not make me popular with my Senior colleagues.

Q: Did you get much interference from the Seventh Floor?

ZWEIFEL: Not really. Ed Perkins, as Director General, and then Genta Hawkins Holmes, his successor, were exceptionally supportive of these efforts. They were also, of course, realistic in what they could and could not achieve. For example, it would have been less than smart for the Director General to argue against what was coming out of the White House in terms of the emphasis on diversity and what have you. Those directives had to be followed, and we all did so. There were a few occasions when the Seventh Floor, up to and including the Secretary, were personally interested into a particular appointment or assignment. That could cause a little heartburn, but those cases were very rare. The system obviously is such that the higher the rank of the individual concerned, the looser the discipline and the greater the possibility that Department principals will be enticed into relevant personnel decisions.

Q: That's very true. Is bidding a good idea?

ZWEIFEL: Bidding is a good idea, even essential to the way in which assignments are now made. I don't think we ever had a system in which you could assign someone without consultation of some sort. You have to have an open system. That being the case, the exact modalities can be discussed, moved about, and fine-tuned. But you must have an orderly process. And a part of that process should be a strong commitment to abide by decisions. Once a bid is submitted, the officer must agree to accept the assignment to that

position. You must know that if you do not get one of your high bids, you will accept assignment to one which is lower on your scale of preferences.

Q: Going on from there, did you find that family problems restricted assignments of Senior Officers?

ZWEIFEL: The factor that is increasingly important is the two career family. That has become a major issue at all ranks. It is a difficult one. Many very good officers have opted for positions that are not as career-enhancing as other assignments might be, simply to accommodate the needs of a working spouse.

Q: In other words, stay in Washington?

ZWEIFEL: A lot of them choose to remain in Washington or to accept a post where the spouse can expect to find employment in their own field.

Q: Probably not in Kazakhstan.

ZWEIFEL: That is the sort of decisions which have to be made.

Q: And that penalized the other officers.

ZWEIFEL: Implicitly. Someone has to staff the less desirable posts. The tandem issue presents other challenges-when both members of a couple are Foreign Service employees. But careers outside the Service raise the question of how far the Department should go in accommodating an employee's personal and family needs. Family separations are sometimes inevitable.

Q: At least they stick to it, I mean, where the husband goes off and the wife stays.

ZWEIFEL: There are several such cases..

Q: Were you under much pressure to mirror America as they say?

ZWEIFEL: At the senior level, it was, in a sense, too late. We had to deal with the matrix of Senior Officers which existed, not fully reflective of a cross-section of our population. But in the assignment process, there was tremendous emphasis on diversity, yes. Whether Officer X got a choice job or whether it went to Officer Y often turned on diversity considerations. There was a marked bias in favor of actions which would bring the Service more closely to reflect our society's makeup. The cadre of Seniors was not very reflective in that sense.

Q: No, and they never will be, Dave.

ZWEIFEL: I agree entirely. One of the primary reasons is that the competition for top-notch diversity personnel is so stiff that government service, especially in an era where such service is the target of repeated and seemingly relentless downsizing just is not attractive. The Foreign Service is not well positioned to compete for such persons when it comes to employment.

Q: There is little appeal to people of that caliber, of issuing visas in Manila for the rest of their life.

At the end of your tour, in 1993, you went back to your first post, Rio de Janeiro, as Consul General. You re one of the few officers I know of who's ever done that. Did you bid on this assignment yourself?

ZWEIFEL: It was my reward!

Q: All right. What were your emotions on going back?

ZWEIFEL: I was absolutely delighted. Rio has to be among the world's most beautiful places to be. I can't conceive of a more open and gratifying environment in which to work.

Q: How had the place changed? What changes did you notice after 30 years?

ZWEIFEL: The changes were wall to wall, so to speak. When the Embassy moved to Brasilia, Rio was reduced to the status of a Consulate General. It is still a large post, with about 80 American and perhaps 250 Brazilian employees. I think it was our second or third largest Consulate General in the world. But during my tour, there were very large reductions. By the time I left, some 30 American and 100 FSN positions had been eliminated. It is a critical time for that post, not an easy work environment. But still, it was a wonderful place to end my career.

Q: Quite a drastic reduction.

ZWEIFEL: The city of Rio had also changed a lot, of course. Some of the deterioration which had occurred was the result, I believe, of a deliberate decision by the Federal Government to reduce the importance of the city.

Q: What were your relations with the Embassy in Brasilia and with Ambassador, who was Rick Melton, I believe?

ZWEIFEL: Rick Melton was Ambassador when I arrived. He was succeeded by Mel Levitsky. I enjoyed working with both of them very much. I had worked with Rick when he was Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA at the time I was Director for Caribbean Affairs. So we knew and respected each other, worked well together. I had known Mel

Levitsky when he headed the International Narcotics Management Bureau (INM) in the Department. I had high respect for him as well.

Both of those career officers ran an excellent Mission. Different personalities entirely, which you would expect from any two officers coming into such positions of leadership. Both of them wanted and got a situation in which the constituent posts-especially the large Consulates General in Rio and Sao Paulo-were expected to do a lot of political and economic work in addition to their other functions. As Consul General, I was also expected to be an active participant in the overall country reporting effort. It was up to my judgment whether our reporting should go direct or be routed through the Embassy. The Embassy rarely took exception to our decisions in that respect.

Q: So you could do independent reporting?

ZWEIFEL: Yes.

Q: How often did you get to Brasilia?

ZWEIFEL: I was in Rio for just under two years, during which time I got to Brasilia four times. And the Ambassador Levitsky came to Rio on several occasions-four or five times during my time.

Q: What were your relations with the authorities in Rio?

ZWEIFEL: Rio continues to be an interesting listening post. Even though the capital and Federal Government are in Brasilia, many political figures tend to gravitate to Rio on the weekends and otherwise. With heavy work schedules when they are in Brasilia during the week, they ironically might be more accessible when they are in Rio. In addition, many prominent Brazilians chose to settle in Rio when out of government. For example, the former Secretary General of the OAS, Baena Soares. On the eve of his retirement from the OAS, he arranged to have that organization's General Assembly meet in Belem, Brazil, his hometown. But of course when he retired, he settled in Rio! Once when I called on him, he told me that the Federal Government had asked him to head an institute dealing with public awareness of foreign policy issues. It was a full-time and prestigious position. After thinking about it for a time, Baena Soares agreed to take on the assignment-but only on the condition that he would not have to live and work in Brasilia.

My regular interlocutors in Rio included former Finance Ministers, Foreign Ministers, State Government officials in the five states which comprised the Consular District. It was a good and interesting mix.

Q: That made it very interesting for you as Consul General. You weren't limited to consular work per se.

ZWEIFEL: Even in economic terms, although Rio is a distant second to Sao Paulo in terms of importance to the overall Brazilian economy, it is still a very important center. I used to point out to visitors that if any of three Brazilian states-Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, or Minas Gerais-was an independent country, it would thereby be the fourth largest economy in Latin America. Sao Paulo has an economy of about \$150 billion, Rio and Minas each have state economies in the range of \$50 billion. Each overshadows countries such as Chile or Colombia. The State of Sergipe, the smallest in Brazil and located in the very poor northeast of the country, has an economy the size of Bolivia's. The State of Espirito Santo-another of the five in the Rio Consular District-has an economy as large as that of Paraguay. So, you are dealing with economies of considerable scale.

Q: You're talking about economics, but were you there when they had the bad inflation, when they changed currencies?

ZWEIFEL: Yes. The Real Plan came in June of 1994, during my tour. (The Real is the new currency unit.) Up until that time, Brazil was experiencing rampant inflation. In economic terms, it was not hyperinflation because it never reached the point where Brazilians moved out of their own currency into that of another country's. That was the case, for example, in Yugoslavia where the German Deutschmark became the medium of exchange.

At the end, just before the changeover in currencies, it could be said that the inflation rate was either 5000% percent per annum-or zero! How could both be true? Well, the thing that made it so was complete indexation on a daily basis. Through this mechanism-the daily adjustment of prices and wages-the inflation was squeezed out. Of course, this indexation was not a good economic policy to pursue. There was no incentive for any savings or capital investment. Instead, people were counting on currency speculation to keep ahead of the curve. The Cruzeiro Real-then the currency-was constantly and rapidly losing value. The impetus in a high inflation environment is to spend what you have before it loses value. The result is high expenditures on low value items or perishables. Restaurants-you had to eat anyway-were always crowded. People could not save to buy durable goods or an apartment, for example, but they could afford to eat out which was better than just losing the value of whatever money they had.

Q: Not very healthy for the economy. What happened to stem that tide?

ZWEIFEL: The decision was first to change the currency, in the process lopping off all the zeros. This time, there was some success. Then the government sought to open up the economy to imports. The availability of consumer goods helped hold the line. There were also attempts to bring about economic, fiscal and social reforms, essential if the Real Plan was to achieve long-term success.

Despite some successes, Brazilian government expenditures for items such as social security are too high to be sustained over time. Interest rates are still usurious,

discouraging investment. The government's objective is to prevent the return of high inflation, but the obverse may be low or no growth in the economy.

At any rate, progress is being made. There has been privatization of a number of sectors of the economy. The steel industry has been completely privatized. Similar efforts are being made in the electric energy sector, more modestly in the realm of telecommunications. So Brazil is headed in the right direction, although there is still a long way to go before the effort is fully in place and sustainable.

Q: What about terrorism? Were you under any terrorist threats at the Consulate General while you were there?

ZWEIFEL: No threats of a terrorist nature at all. Crime is a very, very serious problem, especially in Rio and Sao Paulo. There is a steady drumbeat of instances in which people are robbed, mugged, what have you. Murder rates are astronomical. Fortunately, this crime has not specifically been targeted against Americans or other foreigners, although they have been occasional victims. It was always necessary to be careful, on the alert, but there was no terrorism per se.

Q: And anti-American sentiments, did you find much of that?

ZWEIFEL: None whatsoever. Again, one of the reasons why I love Brazil and always will is that the Brazilians have always been confident enough of their own sense of nationhood, proud of their culture without being anti-American.

Q: How about the drug problem?

ZWEIFEL: Narcotics are of increasing concern in Brazil which is primarily a transit country with illegal substances moving through, in good part, destined for European markets. But narcotics is such a fungible commodity. It moves around, and passing through inevitably means that some of it stays, rubs off on the local society. So you have a growing drug abuse problem in the country. Much of the violence in both Rio and Sao Paulo is between and among drug lords or gangs which try to control local trafficking.

Q: In 1995, you decided to retire.

ZWEIFEL: The Service decided that I was going to retire.

Q: Yes, well, that happens to all of us. I'd like for you to spend a minute or so giving what I'd call career reflections. How do you compare the Foreign Service today with what it was when you entered over 30 years ago?

ZWEIFEL: First, let me say that I will always look back on the Foreign Service as having been a tremendous opportunity and a tremendous career. I enjoyed all of it, maybe not equally, but I enjoyed all of it. I was the beneficiary of what I would term the

democratization of the Service. The Service, for the first time, was reaching out beyond the Eastern Establishment, beyond the Ivy League set, to try to draw in people of less traditional backgrounds than those which had dominated the career for so long. I've always appreciated that effort. I felt that it was a movement to enrich the Foreign Service, to challenge the imaginations of Americans who were interested in careers in foreign affairs in a way that, at an earlier time, they would not have deemed possible. In my view, the challenge facing the Service today could be equally gratifying as the effort goes forward to better reflect the full richness of our society. The quality of the Service can remain very high as this develops, but only if there is a concomitant concern for professionalism and a sense of mission such as that which existed when I joined.

I am less confident that those two preconditions now exist. When I received my flag from the Director General, I commented-only partly in jest-that I entered the Foreign Service at a time when it was an honored profession. Nobody would think of harming an American diplomat, for example. The diplomatic corps was an elite group, highly respected, even envied. I then served most of my career when diplomacy was a profession. It became an endangered profession, or at least a sometimes very dangerous one. Colleagues of ours fell victim to terrorism. American diplomats were no longer held in the same respect. Now, we are told that the Service has become a job. Those now considering entry have the same outlook as all others of their generation. They come into the Service knowing that it will be a stepping stone to something else. That is a big change. And so, I noted, I was glad to leave before the Service became a part-time job...

The idea of a long-term commitment is not the same as it was, in my view. The sense of mission and dedication has changed. We can wring our hands and wish for the good old days, but those attitudes will not come back. Modern communications and transportation have also transformed the Service. There is less and less emphasis and value on individual effort and contribution.

We are at a time when the standard of success in any department of the government, including the State Department, is not how well you do the job but, rather, how cheaply you accomplish your tasks. I am reminded of the axiom you get what you pay for. I think that, over time, this will negatively be reflected in the quality of the Foreign Service. Because we are willing to put less of our resources into foreign affairs, we will be less able to attract top quality personnel into the Service. The system will suffer, the nation will pay a price. This is not meant to be predictive and certainly is not inevitable. But, as of this moment, I would have to say that the sense of professionalism, of pride, of devotion to a mission-the ideals which motivated you and me-are not there. Both within the Service and from outside, people are looking at diplomacy in an entirely different light.

Q: Thank you very much, Dave. That was eloquent testimonial. I've been speaking with Ambassador David Zweifel on behalf of the Foreign Service Oral History Program and the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. The date is September 3, 1996. This is Thomas Dunnigan signing off.

End of interview